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SAPPHO

A Tragedy





S A P P H O

A TRAGEDY

In Five Acts

BY

STELLA

AUTHOR OF

'RECORDS OF THE HEART' 'THE KING'S STRATAGEM; OR, THE
PEARL OF POLAND' ETC.

SECOND EDITION



LONDON

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1876

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Malone J. 248.

TO
ADELAIDE RISTORI DEL GRILLO

THE GREATEST LIVING TRAGÉDIENNE

This Drama is Dedicated

BY HER DEVOTED FRIEND

THE AUTHOR

PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

IN the following Scenes the Author has adhered closely to the best authenticated accounts of the Lesbian Poetess.

Her life is involved in great obscurity, and no two biographies of her are identical in data.

That she was born at Mitylene in the sixth century B.C., and held Greece rapt in the spells of her lyre; that she was beloved by Alcæus, and was married to Cercolas, from whom she was soon separated by death or some other cause; that she founded a school for Poetry at Mitylene, and won the Laurel at Olympia; that she met a youth who inspired her with a deathless passion, and followed him to Sicily, are facts drawn from a hundred sources. She was revered by her countrymen. They stamped her image on their money as if she had been their queen, and gave her the title of 'Tenth Muse';

nor was her honour impugned till more than two centuries after her death.

In this Piece the Author has sought to bring the Lesbian Muse within the sympathy and understanding of Humanity by placing her on a level with it, and giving to her tumultuous feelings that simple, frank expression which is the necessity of great emotional natures. Joy and sorrow smite their hearts as the steel the flint, and the fires burst forth with the spontaneity of the lightning.

Heretofore, Sappho has found no interpreter among her own sex: she was left solely to the umpirage of coarse, sensual men who could not understand her for the want of a common organ of perception. They judged her by the samples of womanhood within the range of their comprehension, and rendered a most cruel and unjust verdict which the foul breath of slander blew from century to century.

A few high-minded scholars of the present age have essayed to mollify the revolting scandals contained in Bayle's Dictionary and other publications, by saying that there were two Sapphos; that greater freedom of expression was permitted to the Lesbian women than to the women of Attica, who were not allowed to overstep the domestic circle; that the *refined* Comedians of Athens, therefore, mistook the frankness of genius in the Lesbian Poetess for the boldness of the courtesan. This is nonsense. There was but one Sappho—the great inspired, outspoken Lesbian Muse. Why do not these good and wise men *fearlessly* crush these slanders

by making a law (as did Solon) to put to death the libellers of the dead, and the promulgators of such libels? An excess of punishment is awarded for striking from behind, for hitting a foe when he is down; but the dead have no protection against the cowards who strike through the grave with intent to kill a name, dearer than life.

This Drama was the earnest labour of years, pursued in different lands; and to the many who have found in it good work, have praised it, and have bought it, throughout Europe and America, the Author here tenders her heartfelt thanks. She also excuses the few who essayed to show their *learning* by finding fault with words.

Censors found that 'Endor' in Sappho's mouth was an anachronism. The *learned* critics meant to say that in the last half of the sixth century B.C. the Greeks could have had no knowledge of the story of 'Endor' either from tradition or from the Holy Scriptures. History shall be the arbiter.

1055 years B.C.—nearly four centuries prior to Sappho's time—'said Saul unto his servants (1 Sam. xxviii. 7), Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her; and his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor.'

The reply of the King's servants is in evidence that the Witch at Endor had a reputation for divination prior to her interview with Saul.

They had heard of her—meaning that her name was

widespread. The story of 'Endor,' therefore, was a tradition of the country, and was doubtless among those handed down to the Greeks by the Phœnician merchants who covered the Mediterranean with their ships before the time of Homer, keeping direct communication with the coast, especially with the isles of Greece. The Phœnicians taught divination to the Greeks, and in their voyages made a business of narrating the chief events of their country. It is not likely that they omitted the story of 'Endor,' which so well illustrated their lessons in divination. The Jews paid great regard to the traditions of religion, and to this day retain a collection of them.

That the traditions of the Bible were widely known and taught long before and after our era is abundantly evident. St. Paul says (Thess. ii.), 'Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the *traditions* which ye have been taught, whether by word or our Epistle.'

Besides the medium of tradition—through which it is evident the Greeks made themselves masters of Jewish lore—Sappho lived during the Seventy Years' Captivity, when the conquerors had full possession of Jerusalem, and were in constant communication with the Greeks. Not long after this time a king of Greece sent seventy-two philosophers to Jerusalem, on two occasions, to translate the Laws of Moses and other portions of the Bible, and decorated them on their return.

The censors doubted Sappho's knowledge of Homer, whose poems were enacted on every stage in her time; and the first collection of them was made by Pisistratus, her royal friend.

Poor Sappho ! according to these astute critics, thou wert as ignorant as an English authoress of the present time would be if she had never heard of Shakespeare. The objection to '*Bedlam*' was not less learned. It is a corruption of Bethlehem—*House of bread*. The City of Judah, six miles south of Jerusalem, which gave birth to David and Christ, was likely once a charitable institution—*may be a madhouse*. It was hinted that the Greeks had no asylums for the insane. Is it likely that the Præstides were left roaring over plain, wood, and waste until they expired ?

The sneer at '*Phallic procession*' was not less edifying. Encyclopedists say, under the head of 'THEATRUM,' 'The songs inspired by the carousals of the banquet, and uttered amid the revelries of the "Phallic Procession," were coarse, ludicrous, and satirical, interspersed with mutual jest and gibe. Besides the chanters of the Dithyramb and the singers of the *Phallic*, there were Fauns and Satyrs introduced into the merry Dionysia.'

These Dionysian representations were continued until the middle of the sixth century B.C., the time of Sappho, when Thespis reduced them to some kind of unity by introducing into them recitals of the Homeric Poems and other pieces.

The critic who suggested that '*letters*' were unknown at so remote a period as the time of Sappho, should look at the passage in Book vi. of the Iliad, describing the epistle carried by Bellerôphon from Præstus king of Argos to Jobates king of Lycia, his father-in-law.

The belief that this packet was a sealed letter of some length, alphabetically written, is amply justified.

Jove, Jupiter, and Zeus are identical. In the *Iliad* (Book i. 238) Jupiter is called the father of men and gods. His palace is on Olympus. Jove-sprung, Jove-reared, Jove-beloved are frequent epithets in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

What would such *learned* censors do with Shakespeare, if they were to read him close enough to see all the materials he uses to produce effects in his best plays? They might roar like the *Proetides*.

'Hamlet' is founded on a Danish story of the twelfth century, yet the poet introduces into the woof of his immortal work, scenes, words, phrases, and proverbs decidedly English, and never heard of in Denmark. For instance—

'To split the ears of the groundlings.'

The allusion here made by Hamlet applies only to London theatres and the actors of that period (1597), and not to Denmark in the twelfth century. '*I know a hawk from a hand saw,*' is a proverb only known in England, and originating in hawking. Also—'*Heavy-headed revel,*' '*Where is now White-freyers?*' '*Swinish phrase,*' '*Kettle-drum,*' '*He did comply with his dug before he sucked it,*' &c. &c.

Critics tearing these vulgar phrases out of Shakespeare would seem like crows plucking pinfeathers out of the eagle. The poet holds a license from heaven to employ all materials that enable him to produce the best effects, and to conduct his theme to a grand

Dénoûment; and no one has a right to slander him or *steal his good work*.

History sanctions the assemblage, on the same boards, of the entire *dramatis personæ* of this piece.

Diogenes Laërtius and Plutarch tell us that Thespis acted plays in Solon's time; that when Pisistratus had wounded himself, Solon said—'Ay, this comes of Thespis acting and performing Ulysses in his tragedy; but he wounded himself to deceive his enemies—you to deceive your countrymen.'

Pisistratus commenced his reign Olympiad LIV. Pliny says—'The first tyrant in the world was Phalaris at Agrigentum.' Suidas adds—'Phalaris was tyrant over all Sicily about Olympiad LII. He was contemporary with Stesichörus, and survived him.

'Stesichörus was born at Himera in Sicily about Olympiad XXXVII. He lived in the time of Phalaris, and was contemporary with Sappho, Alcæus, and Pittacus.'—Clinton, 'Fast. Hellen.'

Bayle says—'Si Anacréon et Sapho se fussent vus dans leurs jeunes ans, ils se seraient fait l'amour. Dephelus a fait mention de leur amour: ce devrait être dans Athènes. J'ajoute que Anacréon a été contemporain de Solon, d'Æsope, de Crésus, et de Pisistrate.'

STELLA.

LONDON: June 1876.

PROLOGUE.

For all who out of self an hour can go,
Into another's heart and feel its woe—
Its burning wounds, its pains, its pangs unknown,
Its hopes, its joys, its sorrows make their own—
Whose spirits, softened in the school of Dole,
Feel finest vibratings of a great soul,
And all its solemn mysteries solve aright,
We lift the curtain of the past to-night.
Ye're here. With simple mien and eyes aglow,
And hearts of tempered fire, and souls of snow,
I see you there mid beauty's proud display,
Like bright stars seated in the Milky Way.
The present and its cares behind you cast,
And live this evening in the classic past!
There face to face th' immortal Lesbian meet,
And hear her pulses throb, her great heart beat;
Now softly, joyous as a marriage bell,
Now sadly, solemn as a funeral knell,
And ken upon her spirit's stormy sky,
Reflections of the true divinity.
Long ere the Star of Bethlehem arose,
And shook for aye Olympian Jove's repose,
See proud Athenæ, like the Phoenix rise,
And with her brazen temples prop the skies

Gardens and groves, th' Acropolis expand,
Beneath the wise usurper's* fostering hand ;
Survey the Dionysia—king and sage,
Poet and peasant in its sports engage.
High, low, rich, poor, all to one level sunk,
Pleasure and wit run mad, a nation drunk.
Next, see before Olympian umpires throng
The famed disputants for the wreath of song,
Each holding in his hand a little scroll.
Then hear old Solon's lofty numbers roll,
Æsop, *Alcæus*, and *Stesichorus* sing ;
Anacreon, like the skylark on the wing,
His dewy notes upon the mute air fling ;
List to *Erinna*—thrill to *Sappho's* lyre,
As through your bosoms runs its quickening fire ;
Follow her to *Olympia*—see her crowned—
The sacred laurel round her temples wound ;
Then like a falling star, thorns in her crown,
Into the pitiless Sea of *Leucaté* go down.

* *Pisistratus*.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PHAON, *a young Shepherd.*
ALCÆUS, *a Poet of Lesbos.*
PISISTRATUS, *King of Athens.*
PHALARIS, *King of Agrigentum.*
SOLON, *the Athenian Lawgiver.*
ÆSOP, *the Fabulist.*
THESPIS, *the Tragedian.*
STESICHORUS, *Inventor of the Chorus.*
ANACREON, *Lyric Poet.*
THEOGNIS, *Poet of Megara.*
IBYCUS, *Poet of Italy.*
MINERMUS, *Poet of Ionia.*
CHARAXUS, *Brother to SAPPHO.*
CLITUS, *a Harper, and Slave to SAPPHO.*
CONFIO, *an Emissary of PISISTRATUS.*
SOOTHSAYER, *a Slave to SAPPHO.*
APOLLO.
HIGH PRIEST.
SAPPHO, *of Mitylene.*
CLEONE, *her Slave.*
RHODOPE, *her Nurse.*
ERINNA,
ATHIS,
ANACTORIA,
NASIDICA,
UNICA, and
GONGYLA, } *Pupils of SAPPHO.*
DORICHA, *a Slave.*
VENUS.

Officers—People—Sailors—Slaves.

*Scene of Act I., Mitylene; of Acts II. and III., Athens;
of Act IV., Sicily; of Act. V., Ionia.*

SAPPHO.



ACT I.

SCENE I.

A room in SAPPHO's house at Mitylene. Busts of Homer, Apollo, and the Muses in niches. Lyres, harps, and lutes around a table, centre. Enter ERINNA, ATHIS, UNICA, GONGYLA, ANACTORIA, and NASIDICA, right, with flowers, and take their places at the table.

SAPPHO (*entering, left, with a branch of myrtle
in her hand*)

Good morn, dear pupils, each a sweet good morn,
And many sweet thanks for these smiles of Flora,
Which put to flight unwelcome melancholy,
And shrive my heart.

Ye have been to the concerts of the birds—
Sweetest sopranos, tenors, and contraltos—
Essay to weave their melody in verse
For this day's lesson :

Bring me the soul of song in chastest garb,
And not a corpse bedecked with gaudy tinsel :
Now court the Muses with the poet's ardour,
Whilst I go forth to watch the eagle's flight.

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[*She pauses at HOMER's bust, at left door*

B

ATHIS

These lessons are not worth the time they kill.

UNICA

My thoughts are not obedient to my will.

GONGYLA

Before I came to Sappho's school my thoughts
Ran into poetry as naturally
As music flows from lark's mellifluent throat ;
Now with a hesitating step they come,
Like curbless coursers to receive the bit.

ANACTORIA

Song never was and never can be taught.
Think'st if Alcæus had been Homer's pupil
He could create a second Iliad ?
No more than I can write an Odyssey
Because I'm pupil of the Sapphic Muse.

ATHIS

If Sappho be a Muse, I am a goddess.

ANACTORIA

Tenth Muse the poets of the time have styled her.

ATHIS

Her gold, and not her genius, bought that title.
Before she wed the merchant prince of Andros
The critics could not hear the Lesbian's lyre ;
Its golden strings then made such wondrous music,
All Greece got drunk on joy, and cried 'Tenth Muse !'

ANACTORIA

Alcæus always praised the Lesbian's song.

ATHIS

Alcæus is a hoary doting fool,
As old men always are when they're in love.
'Tis known when Sappho wedded Cercolas
For gold—not love—Alcæus went stark mad,
Upset the tables, beat to death his servants,
Spurred on his steeds till they fell dead beneath him,
And played the devil till her husband left her,
And Pittacus, to save her reputation,
Sent him to Egypt.

ERINNA

Silence! her name is written on the stars
In letters that will live as long as they.

ATHIS

List to the champion of the Lesbian's fame!
She pleads her cause like lawyer double-fee'd.
All Mitylene swear that Sappho's mad:
What good can rumour of a woman say
Who writes more love-songs than Anacreon;
Spends half her nights in babbling with the stars,
And gives the other half to clamorous lovers?

ERINNA

I'll hear no more against our noble Sappho,
Who is as chaste as Dian—great as Homer.

ATHIS

As great as Homer!
Of poetry she knows no more than I:

She writes no better poetry than I ;
Yet, yesterday, she cut and slashed my poem
Until beginning had it none, nor ending.

NASIDICA

So slashed she mine.

UNICA

She tore mine into pieces.

GONGYLA

She struck mine out with one dash of her pen.

ANACTORIA

A day ago I wrote an ode to Love
The which she ground to powder 'twixt her fingers.

ATHIS

She is an envious pedagogue. I hate her.

ERINNA (*rising*)

Silence, ungrateful maids ! Poor half-fledged bard-
lings,

Whose lyres will ne'er be heard in Fame's proud
temple.

Posterity will only know you as

The pupils Lesbian Sappho loved and taught.

Doth she not shelter, feed you, teach you gratis ?

Toil like a slave to purge your minds of darkness,

And fill them with th' eternal light of Zeus ?

Great, high-souled Sappho ! envied, slandered, and

Misunderstood by those who ought to know

Thee best, and prize thee more than wealth of Cræsus,

I love thee with a reverential love

That I can only feel for one who wears
The mantle of Divinity.

SAPPHO (*rushing forward*)

Erinna, guardian angel of my fame,
I honour, love thee for thy sense of justice!

[*To her pupils.*]

My generous pupils, I will not detain you,
Retire, and bring me each an ode on slander.

[*Exeunt pupils.*]

Erinna, let me weep upon thy bosom :
I heard that colocation—let it pass.
It cut into my soul—but let it pass ;
It is the price of fame.
I have stood face to face with Death—but Slander,
Ingratitude, are foes more terrible :
Death strikes and leaves us conscious of no ill—
They deeper stab, and stab, but do not kill. [*Sobs.*]

ERINNA

Sappho, Apollo's darling, do not weep,
An army of such babblers could not harm thee.

SAPPHO

Erinna, purest, best Erinna, I
Am not impervious to the beggar's frown.
I am so organised, so finely strung
To all the higher harmonies of being,
The sting of Zeus's smallest, creeping thing
Can shake my soul into its very centre.

ERINNA

Methought the poet's world revolved so far
Above this world, he heard nor felt its motion.

SAPPHO

The poet fills the largest human orbit.
As is the ocean to the streams that form it,
So is the poet to his fellow-kind—
His nature holds a myriad of smaller beings.
Was not old Homer mightier far than Troy,
And all the Grecian hosts that girt her round?
Combined, they could not lift the grand old bard,
But in his mighty mind he took them up
And, battling, set them on the heights of Fame
For centuries unborn to gaze upon.

ERINNA

What is this power that overreaches Jove's?

SAPPHO

Poetry is the lightning of great souls,
Which Jove-appointed poets chain in words
And set unto the music of the spheres.

ERINNA

Then is the Lesbian happy—

SAPPHO

O Erinna!

ERINNA

What more wouldst ask of Heaven than be a poet,
Jove's chosen chainer of immortal fires?

SAPPHO

Food for my famished heart—undying love.

ERINNA

Thou art Apollo's darling—heiress of Jove.

SAPPHO

Alas ! I starve upon such pabulum.

ERINNA

Hellas adores thee.

SAPPHO

That is adoration
Which stimulates, but does not satisfy.

ERINNA

Erinna loves thee—is not this enough ?

SAPPHO

Sweet, artless child ! Thy love to Sappho's heart
Comes like the perfume of a vernal flower—
It soothes and calms, but does not nourish it.

ERINNA

Alcæus loves the Lesbian more than life.

SAPPHO

Alcæus doth not understand love's meaning
Within my heart's interpretation of it.
A pretty face, a soft bewitching smile,
A fairy hand bewilder him an hour,
Then lie upon his memory like dead perfume :
I seek a deep and all-abiding love,
That could not see a hump upon my back
Though it were large as Atlas : love whose eyes
Would vest me with the charms of Aphrodite
Though I were hideous as the hag of Endor ;
A love whose fires shall burn as wild as Ætna's ;
A love whose light shall warm and thrill like Sol's

A love whose power shall hold my soul at anchor,
And leave me nought in heaven or earth to crave.

ERINNA

Such love is but for gods.

SAPPHO

Such is for mortals.

Last night I dreamed I sat beside the sea
Gazing upon the full round moon above me,
When 'twixt me and her face a youth appeared
With form and features radiant as a god's.
His golden hair, luxuriant as a woman's,
Flowed backward from his Adonèan brow,
And from the liquid azure of his eyes
Flashed fires that burned into my soul. Approaching,
With matchless grace he dropped upon his knee,
And in a voice that was all music, said—
'Immortal Sappho! at thy feet I lay
The adoration that thy songs inspire.
To Athens come, and I will be thy slave.'
My future's interwoven with that youth—
I will consult the gods, and know the truth.
To-day from Athens I await Alcæus,
Who shall depeint me all the Athenian youths—
What if he prove the young Anacreon,
With whom I am already half in love?

ERINNA

The youth is but the phantom of thy dream.

SAPPHO

When Reason nods, the spirit oft steals forth
To try its pinions on the soul's highways:

This was some mighty soul of fire unsphered,
That in its meteor flight flashed on my vision.

ERINNA

Thou wert asleep, and therefore could'st not see it.

SAPPHO

My spirit from its prison-house had stolen
In quest of larger spheres of thought and feeling.

ERINNA

Dost thou believe the soul can leave its temple
Ere that Jove send revokeless summons for it?

SAPPHO

High, restless souls, that long to look beyond
Narrow horizons of their bounded visions,
Will from their tabernacles find egress,
And, spanning space, confront omniscient Jove.

ERINNA

Dost think the spirits of the dead return?

SAPPHO

The air, from heaven to earth, and earth to heaven,
Is full of spirits.

ERINNA

Where? I nothing see!

SAPPHO

As the blind see not the visitants who come
To minister unto their needs, but through
The ear take in the finest shades of meaning,

Through sense auricular we viewless hold
Communion with the spirits of the air—
O father! Mother! Child! I hear your pinions,
And feel your love descend into my heart
As dew into the parched lips of the flower!

ERINNA

I nothing hear, and fear that thou art mad.

SAPPHO

If this be madness, then is madness bliss,
Jove's wisest disposition of our wits
When Fate hath driven our bark upon the quicksands,
And all our household gods are lost. Erinna!
If I could put a tongue into my woes,
And make them speak, they'd break thy gentle heart;
If I could turn thine eyes into this bosom,
And make them see the wreck and ruin there—
The lonely wastes, the herbless tracts of sorrow,
The desolation wrought by ruthless wrong,
The pent-up fires that make its heaven a hell—
Thy life would flow away in piteous tears.
But for one star to me this world were starless—
[*Falls on her knees and points to an aureola.*
Behold! 'Tis Peace descending in my heart!
My soul, wide-lipped, imbibes its holy light—
It is the star that will eclipse the night!

RHODOPE (*entering*)

Sapphie, Alcæus is arrived—

SAPPHO (*rising*)

Alcæus!

RHODOPE

Ay, ay, Alcæus, smiling like a boy;
Methinks at sight of thee he'll die of joy.
Dusty, and travel-worn right from the sea,
Like prisoned bird uncaged, he flew to thee.

SAPPHO

Swift let the dear old eagle perch before me.

[*Exit RHODOPE.*]

How much I've suffered since I saw Alcæus!
How many sorrows and misfortunes known
Since Pittacus thrust half the earth betwixt us!

Enter ALCÆUS. She flies into his arms.

Alcæus! dearest!

ALCÆUS

My divinity!

My star amid the storm on land and sea!—
Am I awake, ye gods? Is this the Lesbian
I hold against my wildly beating heart?
Or some fair phantom of a cruel dream?
Let me look in thy face—thy love-lit eyes,
And taste the rosy nectar of thy lips.
It is indeed my Muse!—sun, moon, and stars
Put out your lamps! Her smile illumines the world.—
Erinna! How thou'rt grown since last I saw thee

SAPPHO (*sobbing*)

In thy long absence she has been my friend—
My sweet condoler in the vale of tears.

ALCÆUS

The gods propitious to Erinna be!

SAPPHO

Now on sweet restful couch recline, Alcæus,
And glad my ears with wildest tales of travel ;
Depeint old Nile, and Egypt's dusky daughters—
Sicily, Athens, and the Athenian court—
My soul's athirst for something new and strange.

ALCÆUS (*reclining*)

Thou dost ask much of one so travel-weary.

SAPPHO

Erinna, dearest, order wine and fruit. [*Exit ERINNA.*
A little wine will set thee up, Alcæus,
And make thy tongue as nimble as of yore.

ALCÆUS

The sweetest wine that Hebe ever poured
To please the palates of Olympian gods
Would equal not the nectar of thy presence—
The balmy, breathing incense of thy smile—
The inebriating music of thy voice.
I only ask to sit, and look at thee,
And dream of love—and love's divinity
Till envy, wrong, dissension, strife depart,
And leave the sweet millennium of the heart.
O violet-crowned, pure, sweetly-smiling maid !
The glory of the lyre ! by Jove arrayed
In all that fascinates, allures, inspires,
Fling not back on my heart its deathless fires
That shut up in my bosom through long years,
Like Ætna's flames, have fed and throve on tears ;
But unto me thy priceless heart-wealth give,
And in thy hallowed presence let me live,

The happiest man that Hymen ever knew,
Or sweet food from the shrine of Venus drew !

*Re-enter ERINNA, followed by a Slave with
wine and fruit.*

SAPPHO

Here is our isle's best wine ; Alcæus, drink.

ALCÆUS (*drinking*)

May Venus to the Lesbian be propitious,
And twine her second nuptial knot with myrtle !

SAPPHO (*drinking*)

Upon Alcæus may the goddess smile,
And strew his path with Hymen's sweetest flowers !
Now, for old Nile.

ALCÆUS

With Egypt I was charmed—
With Isis and Osiris all enchanted.
Half way to Heaven I scaled the Pyramids,
And from the pinnacles of demigods
Surveyed the wonders of Sesostris' Land.
Beneath me gazed upon the horrid Sphynx—
Fell shaper of the fate of Cædipus—
But Theba, with her hundred brazen gates,
And troops of black-eyed beauties took me captive ;
And had my heart been free from Sapphic spell,
With Theba I had been content to dwell.

SAPPHO

Enough of Egypt's sirens. Paint the tempest
That cast thee on the coast of Sicily—
I like the grandeur of a storm at sea.

ALCÆUS

With prosperous sail and hearts elate with joy,
We fast were making Agrigentum's port,
When from Olympus Jove let loose his thunder;
Wrapt the blue heaven in intermittent flame,
And rocked the ocean like an infant-cradle;
Shook from the yards the pallid mariners,
And swept away the mizzen like a straw.
A little while the staunch ship braved the tempest,
Parried its blows like skilful duellist,
Then, staggered, reared, and pitched, like frightened
steed,
Rolled on her beam-ends, like a vanquished wrestler,
And, with a wail that startled hell, went down.

SAPPHO

O wondrous picture! Living, breathing, speaking,
Loud as the seahounds howled above her grave!—
I'd barter half the sweetest life to see
The death of such a ship in such a sea—
To fight a duel with such enemy,
'Twould woof my song with realistic beams—
Nerve, sinew, daring; never born of dreams.
Why is old Homer greatest of all poets?
Because he mingled in the battle's din,
And trod the sheaf-strown harvest-fields of Death;
Measured the statures of full-blooded passions—
Souls high as heaven—and low as lowest hell—
Go on, Alcæus, Pegasus I've tied.

ALCÆUS

Upon a spar, at last, I reached the shore,
And found me in the palace of Phalaris,
Who, though a savage, proved a sovereign friend:

Fed me and clothed me ; watched my fevered couch ;
And when the gods restored to me sweet health,
Showed me his bull wherein he roasts his victims,
Read me his letters, models of high art,
Led me up loftiest towers at eve to view
Mad Ætna vomit fire :
And with true princely hospitality,
Sent me to Athens in his royal galley.

SAPPHO

Go on ; I'm hungry for Athenian news.
Discourse of Athens and Pisistratus,
And all the handsome gallants at his court.

ALCÆUS

Athens is growing 'neath the Tyrant's hand :
Gardens he's built beyond th' Acropolis
Wherein the youths of Athens fence and wrestle ;
A temple to Olympian Jove commenced ;
One to Apollo ; one to Dionysus ;
A library collected ; schools established ;
And now is bringing Homer's soul to light.

SAPPHO

The gods protect the Poet's royal friend !

ALCÆUS

The Tyrant is beset by many foes :
Old Solon and his laws he has adopted,
But old Megacles is his enemy,
Because he will not share his daughter's couch,
And rear up kings from that accursed stock :
Anon he'll join the party of Lycurgus,
And hurl the Tyrant from th' Athenian throne.

SAPPHO

Now, let us have a portrait of the man.

ALCÆUS

Pisistratus is neither tall nor short,
Heavy nor lithesome, handsome, nor ill-favoured,
But full broad-browed, broad-chested, like a Spartan,
And looks the warrior twice more than the king.

SAPPHO

A portrait capitally drawn. Go on,
Old bard.

ALCÆUS

The tyrant is ambitious
To make his court the cynosure of Greece,
And in his diadem of glory set
The brightest stars of art and poetry.
Now, dwelling at his court are painters, poets;
The young Anacreon——

SAPPHO

Anacreon!

How looks he? Is he handsome, straight, crook'd,
hunched,
Azure-eyed, golden-haired, Apollo-like?

ALCÆUS

He's straight when he's not drunk, which being often,
He's often crook'd. His hair and eyes are dusky;
His nose large, pugged, and winey——

SAPPHO

Draw the others.

ALCÆUS

Stesichorus is handsome, tall, and stately ;
Theognis hoary ; Æsop short and hunched ;
Solon stout ; Thespis withered ; Ibycus
Young, nectar-lipped ; Minermus Adonean.

SAPPHO

Go on ! I'm dying !

ALCÆUS

Agrigentum's stern,
Stoic, and savage-looking as his deeds.
Hath a high brow, lantern jaws, hooked nose, wide
mouth,
Teeth long, thick, yellow, like a cannibal's,
And always has his bull upon his lips.

SAPPHO (*aside to ERINNA*)

My phantom's not among the portraitures.

ALCÆUS

But I forget Pisistratus' commands.
I am the bearer of his royal summons
For Sappho to attend the Dionysia,
And with the bards of Greece contest the laurel.

SAPPHO

A summons from Pisistratus to Athens !

ALCÆUS

His royal galley waits thee in the bay ;
Eolus willing, we'll depart to-day.

C

SAPPHO

Now am I happy ! Now will see Athenæ !
The Court, Pisistratus, Theognis, Solon,
Stesichorus, the famed Anacreon,
And with them at the games contest the laurel—
What if I win it, dear Alcæus, what ?

ALCÆUS

Why, kneeling in the temple of Olympia,
The umpire on thy brow shall set the crown
Of glory, and amid the acclamations
Of Greece assembled I will lead thee forth.

SAPPHO

Erinna must go too.

ALCÆUS

And so she shall.

SAPPHO

O gods ! receive my thanks, and bless Alcæus
For this most unexpected happiness !
Erinna, sweetest, hasten to Charaxus,
And warn him to come hither for leave-taking :
Apprise my pupils of my swift departure,
And bid my slaves be ready at the tide
To follow me to Athens in my galley :
Then, tell my soothsayer I'd speak with him.

[*Exit* ERINNA.]

Alcæus dear, one favour ere we go.
You know Charaxus, youngest of our house,
And of my brothers dearest to my heart :
With one Doricha, an Egyptian slave,
Whom recently he purchased on the Nile,

He is in love, and wills, I fear, to wed :
Dissuade him from an act so blemishing.

ALCÆUS

I'd try to swim old Styx if Sappho bade it ;
But if Charaxus will to wed Doricha,
Olympian Jove cannot avert the act.
I know the fatal spell of her dark beauty
Upon man's heart : within her coil she's held
Half royal Egypt. Love will brook no curb,
Else had I put it on him long ago.
I'm not Alcæus—I am Sappho, or
A thing so chained to her I seem the same.
My slumbering lyre wakes only to her bidding ;
My heart, my pulse beat not for me, but her ;
'Tis not my soul that holds this house of clay,
But hers that rules it with a regal sway.
My feuds with Pittacus ; my feats in battle ;
Long years of exile ; roving in strange lands,
O'er pathless seas, confronting death and danger,
Were streams wherein I sought to slake the fires
That, gnawing, burned into my heart of heart ;
But time, tide, ocean failed to quench the flame :
If to the stars I looked, there were thine eyes :
If on the flowers I gazed, there were thy smiles :
If in my heart I turned my tearful glance,
There was thine image sitting at the altar.
O glorious Sappho ! matchless Muse divine !
Now end my sorrows at the nuptial shrine !

SAPPHO

Alcæus, dear, my father's friend, and mine,
Without thy smile the world would lampless be—

ALCÆUS

Then thou dost love me? Oh! at last, at last,
I've won the prize of Greece. The youngest Muse,
Apollo's darling, heiress of Olympus.
Oh! let me kneel to thee: let me adore thee,
My light, my life, my soul, my Deity!
Say, only once, '*I love thee*,' and my heart
Shall set it to the music of thy voice,
And sing it in the concerts of the angels.

SAPPHO

I love thee best of mortals.

ALCÆUS

O ye gods,
Let me not die of joy upon joy's brink!
And thou wilt wed me?

SAPPHO

If I ever wed
Again, my father's friend shall be my bridegroom.

ALCÆUS

Omnipotent ruler of both heaven and earth,
At last thou'st heard and answered my sole prayer.
Accept my thanks and boundless gratitude
For this thy greatest and most precious gift.

SAPPHO

Alcæus, good Alcæus, bear with me:
Be patient with my foibles and my fancies:
I am a wayward child—ill understood
Of men, and oft a stranger to myself;

But, wherewithal, endowed with love of justice
And duty, Jove alone can comprehend.
I would not wrong thee for the wealth of Cræsus,
Nor trifle with thy great heart's noble passion ;
But, urge me not to don the nuptial chain :
It was so heavy in my younger days ;
So galling wore into my soul's fine quick,
I fear I could not wear it with meet grace
Ere friendly Time have medicined its wounds :
Meantime, let me lean on thy generous love,
And look up to thee as my demigod.
I am so lonely in this world of woe ;
So many faithless reeds have broke beneath me,
That I could worship one firm, faultless staff.

ALCÆUS

I will not urge thee to the nuptial altar :
I have thy promise, and will wait thy time.
Lean on my love, mine honour, all thy weight.
It would be light, though fifty times as great.
Henceforth, on land or sea, whate'er the weather,
The desert of this life we'll walk together. [Exit.

SAPPHO (*kneeling*)

Hear me, almighty Jove ! This is a moment
Upon whose dizzy pinnacle I tremble,
And heavenward stretch my suppliant hands to
thee !
Steady my footsteps, and around me fling
The sacred mantle of divinity !
Illumine my way with new-trimmed lamps of wisdom
That I may see the dangers lurking there,
And how to walk in harmony with thee !
Thrust thy strong arm 'twixt me and secret foes—

Envy and hate, and all their horrid brood,
That at each upward step, like hungry wolves,
Bound from their hiding-places to devour
And tear in shreds the bold and daring climber !

SOOTH. (*entering*)

Lady, I'm here in answer to thy bidding.

SAPPHO

Dost thou foresee the end of all these things ?

SOOTH.

With these old time-dimmed eyes I nothing see ;
But to my spirit's vision all is clear. [*Aside.*
Would that I could not see, or she were wise !

SAPPHO

Why then, old seer, dost hesitate ? Go on !

SOOTH.

At the Athenian court awaits thee homage
Such as the Queen of Sheba ne'er received.

SAPPHO

Amidst the crowd beholdest a fair-haired youth
On bended knee ?

SOOTH.

Oft on his knee I see him. [*Aside.*
Oh ! that the gods had ta'en him at his birth !
Men clothed in beauty's garb are beauty's foes.

SAPPHO

Upon whose brow will fall the laurel ?

SOOTH.

Sappho's:

'Fore bards and Greece, assembled at Olympia,
The Lesbian will be crowned.

SAPPHO

Enough, they come.

Re-enter ALCÆUS, ERINNA, and *Pupils, right*; CHAR-
AXUS, DORICHA, and *Slaves, left*.

Thou'rt bold, Charaxus, to confront me with
Thy slave.

CHARAXUS

My slave! Was beauty e'er a slave?
She had her birth in heaven, and is as free
To shed her quickening light abroad as Sol.
My heart was dead until Doricha smiled.
On it; then, as the Phoenix from its ashes,
It leaped up, quivering with eternal life.

SAPPHO

To-day, at tide, I leave our native Lesbos,
And by all laws of Jove forbid your union!

CHARAXUS

And by all laws of Jove I thee defy,
And to my bosom clasp my love, my light, my life.

SAPPHO

Fear'st not to clasp the serpent of old Nile?

CHARAXUS

Sappho, I nothing fear from thee nor thine!
I love Doricha—and Doricha's mine!

ALCÆUS

Charaxus, it were better not to wed her.

CHARAXUS

Not for the wealth of Croesus I'd forego it.

SAPPHO

By heaven, Charaxus, if thou wed'st that siren
Brother of mine I never more will call thee!

CHARAXUS

Doricha's more to me than worlds of Sapphos!

SAPPHO (*to her pupils*)

Doubtless ye bring me each a noble poem.

PUPILS

We could not write upon the theme you gave us.

SAPPHO

'Tis strange! You talked exceeding well upon it!
With good Alcæus I depart to-day,
In answer to a summons from Pisistratus
To tend the Dionysia at Olympia,
And with the bards of Greece contest the laurel.
Much time and gold I've spent to prune your minds,
And sow in them the seeds of lofty thought;
To teach you virtue and a chaste deportment—
The art of beauty's most approved adornment.
To-morrow to your several homes return,
And practise on the lessons ye've received:
Study self-conquest—how to draw the curb

Upon your tongues when they 'fore reason run ;
What thoughts become a modest maid to utter ;
How much to say, and how much not to say,
And learn that victory over self is glory
Greater than over mighty armies.
Of poesy I little more can say :
Who hath within his soul most poetry
Is highest, greatest, nearest unto Jove ;
And who hath none is an oblivious being,
Not worth a place in Nature's harmony.
Athis, and Anactoria, Nasidica,
Unica, and Gongyla, fare ye well !

PUPILS (*kneeling*)

Sappho, forgive us !

SAPPHO

I forgive ye all,
And may the gods be mindful of your weal !
[*Exeunt all but SAPPHO, who takes up her golden
lyre and violently sweeps the strings.*
Oh, I must drink of Lethe or go mad !
Clitus, come in, and play my nerves to sleep,
Ere I entrust me to old Neptune's arms !
[*CLITUS enters with his harp and plays to her while
she reclines on a couch with her fingers straying
listlessly over her lyre strings.*
Thou mak'st thy harp talk like a lovelorn soul
Drunk on Nepenthe. Its discourings run
Solemnly beautiful and love-awaking. [*Aside.*
O gods ! wherefore this heart-hunger ? This
gnawing,
Insatiable cankerworm ?—
Play not another note, or thou wilt madden me !

CLITUS

Thy will is law, Muse.

SAPPHO

Call my soothsayer,
Then hold thyself apart, and silently. [*Enter SOOTH.*
What is my future? Is it hell or heaven?

SOOTH.

Lady, methinks 'tis both : sometimes the one,
Sometimes the other.

SAPPHO

Answer with precision.
Hath Jove created for my soul a twin,
Or made me lone and orbless as the comet?

SOOTH.

More like the comet, lady, than aught else—
Fashioned to win the world's wild wonderment.

SAPPHO

Is Venus favourable to my dream?

SOOTH.

Knit-browed, the ireful goddess views thy phantom,
And Cupid laughs to scorn thy love-sick longings.
Thou wert not made for love, nor love for thee;
Give all thy thoughts to Jove and poesy.

SAPPHO

Go, get thee gone!

SOOTH. (*aside, going*)

Unwelcome truths wear stings. [*Exit.*

SAPPHO (*sally*)

I know that my inheritance is song—
From my far heavenward-reaching soul, I know it—
And that I am coheiress with the Nine;
But do I hold my birthright in Parnassus
Upon rendition of all priceless heart-wealth?
No, no; Jove is too great for bartery;
Too high to trade upon his holiest gifts!
Poesy from Erôs is a boon apart:
One is food for the heart, the other the soul;
The one belongs to earth, the other heaven—
Clitus, art there?

CLITUS

Ay, Muse.

SAPPHO

My heart's on fire,
Flaming like a shut-up hell, new fagot-fed;
And I must forth to supplicate Astarte
To put it out.
Follow me at a distance—touch thy harp
Only when I'm dead drunk on weal or woe. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

An arm of the sea. A cluster of myrtles in the foreground. An altar to Venus, right, surmounted by a statue of the goddess. One to Apollo, left, surmounted by a statue of the god. SAPPHO'S house on an eminence, right. Two galleys, bearing the ensigns of Athens and Lesbos at anchor. Young Lesbians dancing, centre, to the music of CLITUS'S Harp, played without. SAPPHO enters, right, softly sweeping the strings of her lyre. The Music ceases. Young Lesbians retire, right.

SAPPHO

This is the hour when Paphian dreams are born,
The beings of the brain take sense and shape;
The hour when tender thoughts come trooping home
Into the mind like little nestling doves;
The solitary heart flings wide its door,
And waits the coming of some genial guest;
When into some great soul I'd merge my soul,
And in a dream of Erôs lose myself.
How softly beats the downy pulse of Nature!
How sweet her sleep, how tranquil her repose!
It is as if o'ercome by bliss expectant,
She'd swooned into the amorous arms of Night.
Ah! could this bosom know such holy rest
As wraps her slumbers round, how blest were I!
But deep down in my heart an Ætna burns,
Whose fires, like thwarted serpents, lash their craters,
And hiss and sting, and sting and hiss for ever.

[*She kneels at the altar of VENUS.*]

Celestial goddess, daughter of great Jove!
Fair Queen of Love, and mother of sweet Hymen,
Whose beauty draws all heaven into thy train,
And holds the conquering gods in hopeless bonds,
Give ear to love-sick Sappho!

Swift from thy myrtle-wreathèd throne descend,
And medicine a heart diseased,
Dying of famine in the sight of plenty.
For every mouth Jove hath provided food ;
For every soul some fount to slake its thirst ;
For every flower some cup of honey-dew.
The grass draws milk from Earth's maternal bosom ;
The thirsty leaf drinks from the lips of Heaven ;
The appetent worm feeds free at Nature's table—
And hath the hungry heart no sweet resource ?
No green oasis in Love's lonely desert ?

Enter VENUS, crowned with myrtle and roses.

Beautiful queen, my soul falls at thy feet,
And all the portals of my heart are open ;
Enter, blest giver of most blissful joys !
Allay the fever of its wild desires,
And throne in it the idol of my dream.

VENUS

For maids who sweep no Paphian lyre
I give all that their hearts desire ;
But unto those endowed with song
I grant no rites, nor do them wrong ;
Their lives with music they should fill
As was ordained by heavenly will.

SAPPHO

Oh ! pity, pity me ! strike not Hope dead
Ere she bring forth quick Joy ! Break not my heart
Upon the gift of song ; but grant to me
One crumb, one pure, sweet crumb from thy rich
table !
Drive not the suppliant minstrel from thy door

To starve upon ambrosia of the lyre,
Which is food for the soul, not for the heart!
Bethink thee of thy great love for Adonis;
How many times it magnified the sun,
And all the beauties of thy beauteous realm.

VENUS

Sappho, thy case thou pleadest well;
But truth to thee I've come to tell,
And snatch thee from thy ruthless fate;
For thy dream's idol 'tis too late.

SAPPHO

Oh! pity, pity me; make me not mad!

VENUS

Whilome I heard thy Paphian prayer,
And hastened from the realms of air
Erôtic counsels to impart,
And ease the aching of thy heart.

Thy virgin feet were straying then
In paths beset by gods and men,
Ready to make thee any vow—
Those virgin charms are absent now.

The heyday of thy youth is flown,
Thy cheeks no more with roses sown;
With thy plain face and stature short,
The God of Love will now but sport.

Thou hast been wed—and been unwed;
His nuptial couch thy rich spouse fled
All discontent, and at my shrine
Sought fresher, sweeter charms than thine.

SAPPHO

What say'st thou, cruel queen? Am I proscribed
Because my cheeks are blanched with early woe,
And man's inconstancy and damnèd falsehood?

VENUS

I only speak the things that be.
Man deems himself created free
To roam at will through beauty's bowers,
And pluck the freshest, sweetest flowers.
Love is not Jove's best gift to thee.
Instead of beauty's potency
He gave the boon of poesy;
Then court the Muse, and on thy lyre
Expend thy heart's Erôtic fire.

SAPPHO

Hath Jove implanted in this breast an Ætna,
And given no egress to its hell of fires?

VENUS

Jove to his creatures doth no wrong.
Thy bosom's fires pour into song;
Dare not heaven's greatest gift abuse
By lightly dealing with the Muse.

SAPPHO

For poesy I flung the gauntlet down,
My nature turned in unaccustomed channels,
Pressed back the currents of maternal milk,
Lavished my full-love-laden youth on song,
And won the bays that wait upon the lyre;
But unappeasable my soul cries out

Across the starless desert of my life—
'Love! Love! Love! Love! Lift to my lips thy cup
Of dead inebriation!'

VENUS

Silence thy soul! Lock up thy heart,
Bar it against Erôtic dart;
The die cast for Olympian wreath,
To fling for love will win but death.

SAPPHO

Bid wild impetuous rivers backward turn,
The rain refuse to fall, the grass to grow,
The flowers to bloom, the womb of Nature quicken
Beneath the vivifying touch of Sol,
And they as well can do it as the poet
Sever the ties that bind his soul to Erôs:
Love is the nerve and sinew of the Muse,
The fire that drives her mettle to its height,
And plumes her pinions for Olympian flight.

VENUS

Thou'rt mad, as poets always are.
Go on; and when night shrouds thy star,
In vain thou'lt call on me in realms afar. [Exit.

SAPPHO

The inhemmed scorpion turns upon itself
Its sting and dies: so may I—hence impious thought!
Steadfast I'll look injustice in the face,
And hug the aspic in Promethian silence.
Erôs and Cupid, Venus, now adieu!
Apollo and the Muse henceforth I'll woo.

[Crosses, and kneels at the altar of APOLLO.

Mighty Apollo, god of the silver bow,
And guardian of the Muse above, below,
From Jove's cloud-circled summit now descend,
And to a child of song assistance lend,
Who hath been wrecked on life's tempestuous sea,
And lost all hold on heaven and earth save thee.
Here in this desert haven be my firm anchor;
Bind up my heart-wounds and appease the canker-
Worm folded in this bosom.
With all that's high and great my soul inspire:
Teach me to sculpture thought; attune the lyre
To highest tension of Homeric fire;
To weave a song whose harmony sublime
Shall splendour worlds yet in the womb of Time.
Make me thy darling; smile upon my prayer;
Clothe me with wings to cleave Olympian air,
And clasp the laurel-crown awaiting there.

*Enter APOLLO with his lyre, and his brow twined with
the sacred laurel.*

APOLLO

Sappho of Lesbos, I have heard thy prayer,
And come to speak to thee the words of wisdom:
To few the gods award the laurel-crown.
The greatest kings and queens, profoundest sages
The world has known, have never worn the laurel.
Not all the titles potentates confer;
Not all the gold that gilds the fields of Ophir;
Not all the treasures of the earth could buy it.
It is reserved for the elect of Jove,
The highest gift on mortals he bestows
For highest virtues, linked with highest works.
Who win th' immortal wreath must banish pleasure;

D

Turn from the pathways of seductive ease :
Gird up their loins to battle with the Gorgons ;
Ascend Parnassus over fiery thorns,
Mid galling showers of Envy's barbèd darts,
And break their souls upon the Olympian lyre.
If to these trials the Lesbian equal prove—
Worship Diana and eschew Astarte—
The deathless wreath shall be her great reward.

SAPPHO

Thrice beautiful Olympian god, inspire me !
Teach me the magic of thy mystic lyre !

APOLLO

The magic of the lyre's unteachable
As music of the spheres :
It is the inborn fire of souls elect,
And laureates of Olympus ; and struck out
By the hard hand of Fate as spark from flint.

SAPPHO

I have known sorrow, gnawing, wasting woe
That found no tongue in song.

APOLLO

Bless Jove for that :
Sorrow's the ordained handmaid of the lyre—
The Vulcan that strikes out its latent fire.

[Lightning.]

That is the poetry of heaven—some mighty soul,
Smote by the jarring elements hath flashed
Across the vision of the startled world. *[Exit.]*

SAPPHO

Stay, stay! baptize me with eternal fire.

[She falls forward as he goes out. ALCEUS, ERINNA, CLITUS, and RHODOPE rush in, lift her from the ground, and lead her on board the Athenian galley. A crowd of slaves with boxes and packages enter to the Lesbian galley. Young Lesbians run in, and cheer them as they push off.]

THE CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Athens. Morning. A reception-hall in the palace of PISISTRATUS. A bust of Homer on a table, centre, at which the Tyrant, in state robes, and with the open Iliad in his hand, is seated, listening to PHAON'S pipe.

PISISTRATUS

Thy piping, Phaon, might enchant the ear
Of Pan, and win Arcadia's fairest nymph;
But rest thy lungs while I discourse with Homer.

[Turns the leaves of the Iliad.]

Oh! what a mighty mind had grand old Homer:
He struck the key-note of the human heart,
And raised men to the level of the gods.
I'd rather be a poet than a king:
The poet lives when kings are dead and rotten,
And in their graves a thousand years forgotten:
A king may wear a crown by stratagem,
Usurp a throne, and guide the ship of state,
And live his little day of gold and glitter;
The poet receives his crown from realms above;
His sole prerogative to reign from Jove.
The poet's the historian of his time—
Monarchs and heroes live but in his rhyme.
This portrait of Thersites breathes: list, Phaon.

'The ugliest man that came to Troy was he,
One eye a-squint—one foot distort had he;
A narrow head—a scanty growth of hair,
And mountain shoulders half his breast o'erspreading.'
To be the author of such poetry
Were worth a century of petty kingship.

[*Glances at PHAON.*

By Jove! the fellow is asleep, and I've
Been reading to the columns. Phaon! Phaon!

PHAON (*as if awaking*)

I'm here, my liege.

PISISTRATUS

Art dreaming of the Lesbian?

PHAON

What youth in Athens doth not dream of Sappho?

PISISTRATUS

Of Sappho all may dream, yet not go mad.

PHAON

I am not mad, but may be when I see her.

PISISTRATUS

The Lesbian's like all other women-poets;
Nor young, nor pretty—haughty, and conceited.

PHAON

If she were old as Endor, stooped as Atlas,
Fancy would vest her with the charms of Venus.

PISISTRATUS

That verifies the adage—'*Love is blind.*'

PHAON

It verifies the wondrous spell of song
When flowing from the lips of woman's soul.

PISISTRATUS

Now, by the gods! what ague-fit is on thee?

PHAON

The hour draws nigh, my liege, when she will enter
To meet the bards and royal Agrigentum.

PISISTRATUS

Well, what of that?

PHAON

Of love they'll all go mad.

PISISTRATUS

Physic's a sovereign cure for love-sickness :
Goslings and boys begetting down are verdant.

PHAON

Twang not the bow of satire at my heart. [Aside.
A thousand darts already quiver in it.

CHAMB. (*entering*)

My liege, Phalaris. [A flourish.

Enter PHALARIS and train.

PISISTRATUS (*rising*)

Welcome, Agrigentum.

PHALARIS

It glads me much to see the king of Athens,
And hear of his poetical surroundings :
Who are disputants for the envied laurel ?

PISISTRATUS

The loftiest names of song.

PHALARIS

I'd hear their music.

PISISTRATUS

Solon, Alcæus, Ibycus, Theognis,
Stesichorus, Anacreon, Erinna,
Minermus, Thespis, Æsop, Sappho.

PHALARIS

Sappho

Of Lesbos here ?

PISISTRATUS

They all are here, my lord.

PHALARIS

I'd swim old Styx to see the Sapphic Muse.

PISISTRATUS

Upon this side that river thou shalt see her ;
The Lesbian and the bards will here anon.

PHALARIS

How looks the Lesbian ? Is she beautiful,
And young enough for Agrigentum's queen ?

PISISTRATUS

Not beautiful, but young enough, methinks.

PHAON (*aside*)

My heart will burst—my brain asunder split.

Enter POETS.

PISISTRATUS

To Agrigentum let me name the poets—
Solon, Anacreon, his kinsman, Æsop, Thespis,
Stesichorus, Theognis, Ibycus,
And Minermus.

PHALARIS

I greet the bards of Greece.

Enter SAPPHO, ALCÆUS, and ERINNA.

PISISTRATUS

Sappho, Alcæus, and the fair Erinna.

PHALARIS (*approaching* SAPPHO)

It glads me to behold the Queen of Song,
To whom all honour, glory, doth belong.

PHAON (*aside*)

I'd stab the lecherous savage to the heart!

SOLON

I would not die until I know by heart
The wondrous songs the Lesbian Muse hath sung.

STESICHORUS

I'd ask no prouder wreath than Sappho wears.

ÆSOP

The Lesbian is the eagle of the skies,
All other birdlings watch with longing eyes.

PHAON (*aside*)

I'd like to knock his hump from off his shoulders.

THEOGNIS

Upon the brow of her who conquers all
May glory's laurel-wreath to-morrow fall.

THESPIS

If Sappho tragedy had written she
Had given to Thespis immortality.

IBYCUS

With earth and heaven to her I humbly bow.

MINERMUS

Of mighty Jove I ask no higher fame
Than on the list with hers to place my name.

ANACREON

Welcome to the Sapphic Muse
Never let us bards refuse ;
Honour to the Lesbian's lyre
Let us pay, and drink its fire,
And around her brow divine
Myrtle with the laurel twine.

In the mighty race of fame
For the laurel and acclaim,
Sappho and Anacreon
Side by side to-morrow run ;
If the laurel-crown be mine
Myrtle round her brow I'll twine.

PHAON (*aside*)

O all ye serpents of perdition sting him !

ANACREON

When I hear the Sapphic lyre
All my youthful blood is fire,
And like lightning through my heart
Flashes Cupid's barbèd dart ;
If the laurel-crown be mine
Myrtle round her brow I'll twine.

Many a time my lyre I've strung,
Many a song to Sappho sung,
Many an anthem poured to Jove,
Many unto the god of love ;
If the laurel-crown be mine
Myrtle round her brow I'll twine.

Welcome, Sappho, welcome here ;
Every poet holds thee dear ;
Every king reveres thy beauty ;
Every slave will do thee duty ;
And around thy brow divine
Myrtle with the laurel twine.

SAPPHO

I thank this Royal Presence and the poets
For sweet bestowment of too much laudation.

[*Places her hand on the bust of Homer.*]

This is the poet worthy of all praise,
The poet worthy of the poet's worship ;
From out whose brain leaped gods, as from the brow
Of Jove Minerva sprung ; out of whose soul
Gushed seas of harmony :
The poet who four hundred years ago
To music set the woes of Ilium,
And with the cries of Agamemnon's foes
Startled the ears of centuries unborn.
When, aided by Apollo and the Muse,
I climb Olympus high as Homer clomb,
And take my seat beside th' immortal bard,
Then, then, and not till then, O poets, spend
Your breath in wafting Sappho to the stars !

*[Glancing right, she sees PHAON bending forward
on his knee, and stretching out his hands to-
wards her.]*

'Tis he, 'tis he ! 'Twas not a dream, Erinna !

*[She swoons in ERINNA'S arms. PHAON falls
forward. All rush to her aid.]*

SCENE II.

SAPPHO'S palace at Athens. A vine-latticed piazza, opening on a garden. A door, left, leading into a room with a window on piazza. Enter SAPPHO and ERINNA by door, left. PISISTRATUS, PHALARIS, PHAON, ALCÆUS, and other poets enter by garden, and are seen eaves-dropping among the vines, each unperceived by the other.

ERINNA

What envious shadow came across thy spirit,
Like cloud athwart the sun at highest noon ?

SAPPHO

It was the apparition of my dream
Whose beauty, flashing through my soul's wide
 windows,
Did set my heart on fire.

ERINNA

 Oh ! weave its flames
Int' song, red-pinioned as Olympian bolt.

SAPPHO

White-lipped and mute the Muse now stands
 before
The conflagration that is raging in me ;
But at the Dionysia list to-morrow :
As lightnings leap from out heaven's aching breast
Into the seething air,
My bosom's gathered fires shall flash in song.
But lip nor lyre can tell thee what love is,
Or is in me.
It is a bird that sings in every bough,
Enchanting worlds with mystic minstrelsy ;
A hand that sweeps the strings of every heart,
Striking out harmony or horrid discord ;
A snake that charms to crush ; an asp that kills
With painless sting ; a cankerworm that folds
Itself up in the sweetest, fairest buds ;
A flame that blows itself out at one puff ;
A fire that burns the fiercer when inhemmed,
And with heat-whited tooth bites down to Hades.
'Tis peace—'tis war—'tis life—annihilation—
'Tis heaven—'tis hell !
Thou saw'st how it did take away my breath—
And thou wilt see it waft me unto death.

ERINNA

The gods forbid the mastery of Cupid.
But tell me how thou find'st Pisistratus ?

SAPPHO

Pisistratus was made to conquer kingdoms,
Not hearts.

ERINNA

And how the young Anacreon ?

SAPPHO

He has a wine-nose, sloven, riotous mien :
Anacreon should sing behind a screen,
And ne'er before it be by sweetheart seen.

ERINNA

And Æsop, how ?

SAPPHO

His hump is merry-making.

ERINNA

How seem Phalaris and the other poets ?

SAPPHO

As apes to gods, seem they unto that youth,
Who is the wedded souls of love and truth ;
But call my soothsayer. Perchance there be
Heartease in divination. Go ! I'm dying.

[*Exit* ERINNA.]

There is divinity in dreams. A strange
Foreshadowing of something that's to be.
The witching Phantom bade me come to Athens—
I'm here—and in my breast the arrow quivers.
O Æsculapius ! medicine my heart—
Son of Apollo ! draw the fatal dart.

(*to SOOTH. entering*)

What tidings from the oracles dost bring me ?

SOOTH.

That thou hast found the phantom of thy dream.

SAPPHO

Is he a man on whom the heart may lean ?

SOOTH.

He is.

SAPPHO

When it is drunk, and o'erlays reason ?

SOOTH.

Ay, even then. (*Aside.*) O Jove ! protect the Muse
Against the jealousies of Venus !

SAPPHO

Go. [*Exit* SOOTH.

PHAON (*advancing and kneeling*)

O Lesbian muse ! O Paphian queen of song !
Angel on eagle's pinions borne along !
Thou star above the stars ! thou sun above

The sun !
Olympian fountain of Erôtic fire !
Thou wonder, and thou glory of the lyre !
Look not disdainfully upon a youth
Who at thy feet hath come to lay the truth !
Untimely though it seem, and overbold
In one so young—Oh ! let the tale be told !
I'm drunk on love—the music of thy name—
Or mad—or both—which are, O Muse, the same !—
Knit not thy brow ! turn not thine eyes away !
But from my lips hear what my heart would say.
My name is Phaon, and my years are few.
Tending the flocks, a shepherd boy I grew
Beside a sister and a fair betrothed
Whom, since I heard the Sapphic lyre, I've loathed :
Flown from as Indian flees the Upas-breath
Whose honey-freighted dews to him are death.
Few days ago I had a dream of thee—
A dream so real, it seemed no dream to me.
Thou wert sitting by the sea in thine own isle,
Thy soft, brown cheek illumined with thy smile ;
Thy tresses flowing backward from thy brow
In sable showers upon a robe of snow,—
Thy face uplifted towards th' enamoured skies,
And all heaven beaming in thy soft dark eyes—
The heaven of love—the heaven of poesy,
And worshipping, I bent a lover's knee.

SAPPHO

O stay ! O stay ! unfold no more to me ;
'Tis the fine woven woof of Destiny.
As Jove declares his laws in bolts that gleam,
The will of Fate's made manifest in dream.
[*Exit into the room. PHAON goes to the window,
and looks in.*]

PHAON

O eyes ! that all the stars of heaven eclipse ;
Bosom, whose whiteness shames Olympian snow ;
Tresses, whose lustre pales the raven's wing ;
Beauty, surpassing Aphrodite's—Hist !
One comes.

[*He crouches beneath the window.* PISISTRATUS
approaches, and seeing him, retires. PHALARIS
approaches.

PHALARIS

Phaon ! I'd like to roast him in my Bull. [*Retires.*

ANACREON (*reeling to the window*)

Glorious Sappho ! queen of song,
All my thoughts to thee belong ;
Thou hast touched my heart with fire ;
Filled my breast with pure desire.

[*He attempts to scale the window.* ALCEUS, *darting from his hiding-place, seizes him.* They
go out fighting.

SCENE III.

Olympia. Morning. An open space in front of the Temple of Zeus. An estrade, centre. An altar to Bacchus, left, surmounted by a statue in the attitude of drinking. Umpires enter to a bench on estrade. PISISTRATUS, PHALARIS, and Princes to seats right of Umpires. PHAON, in blue and white, to place near PISISTRATUS. SAPPHO and ERINNA enter to seats right. The Poets to seats left of estrade. Chorus of Satyrs enter right, led by STESICHORUS.

CHORUS

Bacchus is the god of plenty,
God of wit, and wine, and pleasure;
Unto him our souls we'll empty,
Fill the goblet without measure.

Enter Bacchanalians right, leading a goat decked with gay ribbons and violets, followed by PAN and a crowd of piping Shepherds.

Pull the goat along, nor falter;
Lead him to the thirsty shrine;
Sacrifice him at the altar,
So appease the god of wine.

Then let all be joy and motion,
Pipe, and sing, and shout, and laugh;
Dance and frolic; drink an ocean;
All the founts of pleasure quaff.
[*The Phallic procession, led by THESPIS, passes from right to left, and takes up rear of stage. A dance of Fauns, Muses, and Satyrs follows.*

E .

AN UMPIRE (*rising*)

Now will we hear the poets speak their pieces.
Anacreon commence.

ANACREON

President of Bacchic tribe,
Mine to fill and joy prescribe.
Drain the goblet, dance, and play—
Mad discretion crowns the day :
Blow your pipes and swell your lyres,
Rapture calls, and wine inspires.

UMPIRE

Stesichorus, the Dorian, next.

STESICHORUS

Vain it is for us to weep
That we all in death must sleep ;
With man's life ends all the story
Of his wisdom, wit, and glory.
Then enjoy it while we may,
Eat, and drink, and dance, and play ;
Drain the founts of joy and pleasure,
Fill the goblet without measure.

UMPIRE

Theognis of Magara.

THEOGNIS

Ah, me ! Alike o'er youth and age I sigh—
Impending youth and age that hasten by—
Swift as a thought the flowing moments roll ;
Swift as a racer speeds to reach the goal :

How rich, how happy the contented guest
Who leaves the banquet soon and sinks to rest.

UMPIRE

Ibycus of Italy.

IBYCUS

In my bosom Cupid's power
Never slumbered yet an hour. [Applause.

UMPIRE

Alcæus of Mitylene.

ALCÆUS (*glancing at SAPPHO*)

To Bacchus fill the goblet high ;
To love I drink, and beauty's eye :
For what is there but love below
To lift the heart above its woe ?
It shuts out wrong, and war, and strife,
And is the pole-star of man's life.
To Bacchus fill the goblet high ;
To love I drink, and beauty's eye.

When tost upon the stormy sea,
A wanderer from his home is he ;
The thunder rolls, the tempest raves,
And death stares at him from the waves ;
The star of love gleams through the dark,
And angels guide his death-girt bark ;—
To Bacchus fill the goblet high ;
To love I drink, and beauty's eye.

If from my heaven love's star depart
'Twill leave no ray to light my heart :
No sun, no moon, will shine for me
On this side of eternity ;

R 2

And like the blind I'll grope my way
Until I reach Olympian day.
To Bacchus fill the goblet high ;
To love I drink, and beauty's eye.

UMPIRE

Minermus of Ionia.

MINEERMUS

What were life, and what its treasures,
Golden Venus, wert thou flown ?
Ne'er may I outlive the pleasures
Given to man by thee alone ;
Honied gifts, and sacred love,
Joys all other joys above !

UMPIRE

Æsop, the fabulist.

ÆSOP

Yon glorious orb that gilds the day,
Or placid moon with silver ray ;
Earth, sea, whate'er we gaze upon
Is thine, O Nature ! thine alone ;
But gifts which to ourselves we owe,
What are they all but fear and woe ?
Chance, pleasure—hardly worth possessing—
Ten curses for a single blessing.

UMPIRE

Solon, the lawgiver.

SOLON

Short are the triumphs to injustice given.
Jove sees the end of all from highest heaven ;

And though his silent anger long may lie
Wrapt in the vast concealment of the sky,
Like livid lightning, never doth it sleep,
And though the sire escape, the son shall weep.

UMPIRE

The fair Erinna.

ERINNA

Is there a king in all the earth
Who would not give his right of birth,
His royal crown, and regal sway,
To wear the poet's deathless bay?
The king entombed in memory lies—
The laurelled poet never dies.

[*The kings applaud.*]

UMPIRE

Sappho of Lesbos, Greece with breathless ear
Awaits the music of thy voice to hear.

SAPPHO (*glancing at PHAON*)

In Athens lives a noble youth
Whose eyes speak tomes of love and truth,
Whose presence, like the god of light,
Makes all things beautiful and bright.

When first I met his rapturous glance
I felt a thrill my heart entrance,
A fire spring up in every vein,
An *Ætna* burning in my brain.

'Twas this deprived my soul of rest,
And raised such tumults in my breast,
That while I gazed, in transport tost,
My breath was gone, my voice was lost;

My bosom glowed—the subtle flame
Like lightning ran through all my frame;
O'er my dim eyes a darkness hung;
My ears with hollow murmurs rung.

In dewy damps my limbs were chilled,
My blood with gentle horrors thrilled,
My feeble pulse forgot to play—
I fainted, sunk, and died away.

[*Applause, and cries for another poem.*]

PHAON *wrestles with a Spartan. While he stands
with his foot on the breast of his prostrate foe,
SAPPHO kneeling proffers him her nosegay. As
he takes it he kisses her hand.*

SCENE IV.

SAPPHO'S palace at Athens. The piazza as in Act II. Scene II.

*Enter SAPPHO and ERINNA by door, left. PISISTRATUS,
PHALARIS, PHAON, and the Poets appear among the vines.*

SAPPHO

Oh! I am suffering speechless agony;
Pangs overreaching Æsculapian art.
Lay thy hand on my brow.

ERINNA

'Tis hot as Ætna's.

SAPPHO

The kiss he lavished on my hand did burn
Into my blood like molten lava.

ERINNA

Sappho,
Thou art too great for Cupid's mastery.

SAPPHO

Cupid is master of us all—great, small—
And art, though godlike's but his crouching slave.

ERINNA

Thou'lt not debase the mission of the Muse?

SAPPHO

My love is higher than the Muse's flight,
And deeper than the fathom-line of reason.

ERINNA

Alcæus loves thee with a love all-seeing :
Pisistratus, Phalaris, poets, umpires
Are dying for thee.

SAPPHO

Seas of such love would leave my heart athirst.
Kings have no hearts, and therefore cannot love.
Poets have hearts, but worst of lovers prove.
Kings mate themselves upon Ambition's terms,
Poets on Vanity's or Passion's whims,
I seek a heart whose instincts are too high
To bend to either. Love that brooks no curb,
But burns its way untrammelled as the comet.

[PISISTRATUS *approaches, and kneels.*

PISISTRATUS

Behold the royal captive at thy feet !
Who offers thee his kingdom and his crown.

SAPPHO

I seek a crown that kings cannot confer.

PISISTRATUS

Dost dare, proud Muse, refuse the crown of Athens !

SAPPHO

Bestow it on Cæsuræ, 'tis her right.

PISISTRATUS

Right ! Women have no rights save courtesy's.
[*Aside.*
I'll crown that haughty brow, or break her heart.
[*Exit.*

PHALARIS (*advancing and crowning her*)

Phalaris crowns thee queen of Agrigentum.

SAPPHO (*returning his crown*)

Sappho aspires to wear no kingly crown.

PHALARIS (*aside*)

She plays with kings and kingdoms as with baubles.

Oh! how I'd like to roast her in my Bull! [*Exit.*

[*The Poets approach, and essay to kneel. She waves them to depart. ANACREON kneels.*

ANACREON

By the spells of beauty bound,

Helpless at thy feet I lie;

Venus! bid my suit be crowned,

And with rapture let me die.

SAPPHO

Bacchanal, rise, depart, and come no more!

[*Exit ANACREON.*

ALCÆUS (*aside*)

She doth refuse them all: her heart is mine,

And at her feet I'll lay it with my life.

[*As he approaches, PHAON advances and kneels.*

PHAON

O matchless Muse! O love! O fatal charmer!

Refuse me not the nuptial boon I ask,

And all demented fling me to the fiends!

SAPPHO

It were more meet to mate thyself with one
Whose path is still entwined with vernal flowers.

PHAON

Spring-flowers are fresher, but less honey-lipped
Than blossoms glorifying early summer.

SAPPHO

Bereavement and misfortune have been mine—
The painful pangs ingratitude inflicts
Upon the young and unsuspecting heart.

PHAON

If all the woes of Niobe were thine,
The serpents of Medusa twined thy brow—
I'd swim the fatal Styx to call thee mine.

SAPPHO

Phaon, in youth's sweet time I had a dream.
I lay upon a bed of vernal flowers :
The birds were singing round me like the angels,
The Zephyrs fanning me with loving wings,
And o'er me bent a youth with starry eyes,
And beauty more transcendent than Apollo's.
I woke : the youth had flown, but in my heart
His image left ; I wore it--gazed on it
Till it eclipsed all stars, all moons, all suns,
And of my life became its solar system.
Phaon, that youth was thou—that image thine.
If I could pour my heart's pent fires in song,
As heaven discharges her full-aching bosom
Into the air, 'twould flame the universe ;

But th' only fire-pans of the soul are words,
Weak words, that hold not half its gathered light-
nings.

I love thee with a love all-comprehending
As Jove's omniscience—all-searching, seeing—
I love thee to the height and depth of being.

PHAON

Upon the pinnacle of bliss I stand.
Oh! could I fling away my lowly life
As I can fling away a common garment!

SAPPHO

Beauty's a gift divine. Who doth inspire
A godlike love is kindred to the gods.

PHAON

I feel the greatness of a god within me.
To be th' accepted of the Lesbian Muse,
To stand beside her on the heights of Fame
In presence of discarded kings and bards,
Is glory that Olympian gods might envy.

SAPPHO

Phaon, before me here there is a line—
A narrow boundary 'twixt bliss and woe.
On this side I am all myself have made me;
On that I may be all that thou may'st make me;
On this side's love, fame, honour, adoration;
On that—dost wonder that I pause upon
This side, and weigh the chances of the step?

PHAON (*clasping her to his bosom*)

Cross it, beloved! fear not! Upon this side
Eternal love and adoration wait thee.

SAPPHO

To-morrow to Olympia I repair.
If on my brow the wreath of fame descend,
Who there a myrtle crown me first present,
To him shall be my heart and hand for ever.

PHAON

Then art thou mine, by all th' Olympian gods!
The myrtle, Hymen's holiest emblem there
Shall seal, and sanctify my love, unfathomed,
Unfathomable as eternity!
To-morrow, dost thou say, immortal Muse?

SAPPHO

I dare not look to-morrow in the face,
So big to-morrow is with destiny.

PHAON

To-morrow holds eternity of bliss—
To-morrow?

SAPPHO

At Olympia to-morrow.

[*Exeunt* PHAON *by garden.* SAPPHO *by door.*

ALCÆUS (*staggering forward*)

Where am I? Whence this sable pall,
Whose inky folds around me fall,
Shutting the day-god from my sight?
Just now the world was full of light,
And now to me 'tis starless night.

What have I done, ye gods! Oh, say!
That ye should shut from me the day,
And from my life its beacon bright?
Just now the world was full of light,
And now to me 'tis starless night.

Mine arms I put forth like the blind,
And only empty darkness find—
Sun, moon, and stars have taken their flight—
Just now the world was full of light,
And now to me 'tis starless night.

Must I thus grope along the stream
Of life without a beacon-beam
To guide my lonely steps aright?
Just now the world was full of light,
And now to me 'tis starless night.

Pitying, O Jove! take me from earth;
Allay this bosom's gnawing dearth;
Translate to heaven my beacon bright:
Just now the world was full of light,
And now to me 'tis starless night.

[Falls on his knees, and hides his face in his hands. SAPPHO re-enters, and lays her hands softly on his brow. He springs up with a shudder.]

Basilisk, off! Thy touch, though soft as love's,
Is venomous as the aspic's sting! From thee
The mantle of divinity hath fallen,
And left thee standing in pollution's garb,
A thing to make the blood of virtue quake.

SAPPHO

Alcæus! for the love of sacred things
Let not thy tongue unsheathe heart-slaying daggers.

ALCÆUS

Heart! Thine is food for carrion birds ;
I saw an unfledged buzzard pecking on it !
There is no Sappho now ;
Her funeral knell is ringing in my heart.

SAPPHO

Alcæus, my dead father's friend and mine,
Forgive, and be forgiven. I have lost
The helm of reason. Passion's turbulent sea
Tosses my helpless life-bark towards Charybdis :
Help me to steer it wide of Scylla's hounds,
And moor it in the haven of thy love !
In Phaon's glance there is a sorcerer's spell,
That holds and draws me like a serpent's charm ;
An Ætna in his touch whose red-lipped lavas
Sow in my blood delicious agonies
Of death.

ALCÆUS

I'll kill him !

SAPPHO

No, that would kill me,
His life's my life—his death sure death to me.

ALCÆUS

O jealous, damnèd Venus, that for spite
Dost crucify the greatest of the Muses !
Come to the garden, love, and let sweet zephyr
Fan thy hot brow. Come, lean on me as erst ;
The reed shall break beneath thee never more.

[*Exeunt by garden.*]

SCENE V.

Olympia. Interior of the Temple of Zeus. A statue of Zeus on the altar. An estrade, centre. A great crowd of people enter, and fill up the background. Royal trains enter, and take up their places. PISISTRATUS, PHALARIS, Princes, and Umpires enter to seats on estrade. The poets to places, left. SAPPHO, attired in white skirt and purple mantle, trimmed with gold, and her arms and ankles twined with laurel, enters with ERINNA, right.

UMPIRE (*rising*)

With meet respect and honour for these poets,
Who bravely have contended for the prize,
To Lesbian Sappho we award the laurel.
Sappho, approach. [*She kneels on first step of estrade.*

In presence of the gods,
Poets and kings, and Greece assembled here,
We crown thee Queen of Song. Arise, great Muse!

SAPPHO (*rising*)

To these wise umpires and assembled Greece
Be all my thanks.

PEOPLE

Speak on, thy voice is music
Sweeter than ever rapt Olympian ears.

SAPPHO

I am a poet, not an orator.

PEOPLE

The poet's both. His words are fire; his songs
The beacons burning on the heights of time.

SAPPHO

Came Sappho hither on the wings of ease ?
Cheered by the smiles of older, stronger climbers ?
Were there who, pitying, gave a hand to help
Her up the treacherous steeps ? Were there who
 paused
To list her cries, and to her aid descend
When footholds failed, and reeds beneath her broke ?
Look down the thorny path up which she clomb
All crimson with the blood of her scarred feet,
And learn at what a price she wears the laurel.

PEOPLE

Thy future way with diamonds shall be paved.

SAPPHO

Few are the gems that strew the poet's path ;
Few are the cups of bliss for him to quaff ;
Children of the lyre, however great their worth,
Or broad be their possessions on the earth,
Are martyrs to their mission, heirs of wrong,
Sad immolations on the shrine of song.
Their natal orbits lie as far above
The paths of common souls as realms of Jove ;
They walk with men but are not of mankind ;
They hold discourse with worlds to which they're
 blind,
And with rapt visions gaze beyond the skies,
While on the things of earth men keep their eyes.

[PHAON dashes through the parting crowd, and
 thrusts a myrtle crown in SAPPHO'S hand just as
ALCÆUS and the other poets approach with
 theirs. ALCÆUS springs at him with vengeance

*in his eye ; then starts back, flings away his
myrtle crown, and rushes out, crying.*

No, no ! I will not be a murderer !

[PHAON leads her out amid the applause of the
multitude.

THE CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Athens. A hall in SAPPHO'S palace. Slaves decorating it with laurel. CLITUS wreathing a little throne with myrtle and roses. RHODOPE weaving a garland at a table near him.

CLITUS (*aside*)

Now all is ready for the Queen of Song,
And her young husband, Phaon. Poor Alcæus !
Illusion's football, Cupid's shuttlecock !
Kicked here, knocked there, and twice drove to the
wall.

Since her tenth year he has adored the Muse,
And now she's six-and-thirty, he quite fifty.
When Sappho wed the merchant prince of Andros
The bard went mad as Agamemnon's son,
And rested not until he bred a rupture
In Hymen's realm. He'll kick at heaven again.
I'll do my best to match him with Erinna :
Though she have less than half his years, her love
Will prove an anchor to his drifting life-bark,
And keep his soul from leaping overboard ;
Rhodope, what art doing there so long ?

RHODOPE

Weaving a garland for my little Sapphie.

CLITUS

Go, get the dancers ready. Tell Cleoné
To look her prettiest : she's to play the Hebe,
And lead the dancers in the Muses' revel.
Look to her garb. Let there be nothing in it
That can impede the poetry of motion :
Let fleecy skirts just dally with her knees,
And silken sandals case her twinkling feet :
Down to her slender waist, as free as air,
Let fall the clusters of her raven hair,
And in the sable threads weave amber roses ;
But not another ornament or gem ;
Youth, unadorned, is beauty's diadem.

[*Exit* RHODOPE.]

A SLAVE

Where wilt thou seat the kings and poets ?

CLITUS

Nowhere :

We'll have no kings and poets here to-night,
Except Alcæus and Erinna who,
In fee, are chattels of the Sapphic Muse.
This festival is ours. It is our right
To fête our mistress on her nuptial night.
Hark ye ! swift chariot-wheels straight from Olympia.

[*Looks out.*

Ho ! they come ! summon the dancers. Quick !
they come !

[*Looks out again.*

How beautifully looks the Queen of Song !
With what majestic grace she wears the laurel,
Snatched from the clutch of Greece's envious bards.
But for that dough-faced shepherd at her side,

She'd be Astarte and Diana twined
 By the immortal laurel. But down from
 The summit of Olympus she has stooped
 To lift an idiot to the poet's height.
 There, ashen-lipped as death, Alcæus comes,
 Leading Erinna. Poor old jilted bard,
 I pity him !

Enter a crowd of slaves with flowers and branches of laurel, preceded by CLEONÉ, whom he turns to regard.

Oh ! she is lovely as wine-pouring Hebe !
 Pray Jove she may not captivate the bridegroom,
 And set her tiny foot on Sappho's heart !
 She's dark, he's light, and opposites attract.

[Looks out again.]

Ho ! here they come ! down on your knees and make
 A floral carpet for the Muse's feet !

*[Slaves kneel and lay their flowers on the ground.
 At first sight of PHAON, CLEONÉ faints in the
 arms of a slave. CLITUS and other slaves cheer
 and cry, ' Welcome Muse ! welcome adored mis-
 tress ! ' SAPPHO and PHAON pass to the throne,
 and ALCÆUS leads ERINNA to seats forward.
 CLEONÉ fetches wine to SAPPHO and PHAON,
 ALCÆUS and ERINNA.]*

SAPPHO (*rising*)

Kind friends, I thank you for this generous greeting
 And lavish overflowing of your hearts.
 These decorations, interwove with smiles
 Brighter than Sol's, bespeak your sweet contentment
 With this young master I've imposed upon you ;
 Love only can repay the debt of love.
 Count on my heart for twice what ye've invested.

SLAVES

We only seek the Muse's happiness !

SAPPHO

After long weary years of toiling, climbing
Up thorny steeps mid envy's barbèd arrows,
To-day I reached the summit of Olympus,
And on my brow received the laurel-crown.

SLAVES

Thy brow is worthy of th' immortal laurel !

SAPPHO (*holding up the myrtle-crown*)

Help me to twine with it this myrtle-wreath
In deathless union.

SLAVES

Oh ! we will ! we will !

[*They twine the myrtle-wreath with her laurel crown.*]

SAPPHO

Cleoné, dearest, where's thy greeting kiss ?
'Tis only needed to complete my bliss.

[CLEONÉ, *glancing timidly at PHAON, comes forward and kisses her.*]

Thou art as fresh as spring, as summer sweet,
Now let us list the music of thy feet.

[*As CLEONÉ floats through the dance, PHAON follows her with loving eyes, and flings her roses from SAPPHO'S bouquet, which the Muse pleasantly resents. PISISTRATUS, PHALARIS, and the Poets enter disguised, and mingle among the dancers. All exeunt but ALCEUS and ERINNA.*]

ALCÆUS

Erinna, did'st thou mark that brainless shepherd
Follow Cleoné with enamoured eyes,
And fling her roses mid the dizzy dance?
Already he is smit, and Sappho jealous.
Ill-fated Muse! deluded Queen of Song!
My fallen angel! my lost star! my death!

[*Gazes on a fixed point.*]

Oh! horrid, horrid, damnèd thing, that dost
Appal my soul and prompt it to take flight
From this ungenial and tempestuous sphere!
Oh! oh! oh! it is hideous and brain-splitting,
Erinna!

ERINNA

What, Alcæus?

ALCÆUS

Naked life!

This world divested of illusion's mantle
Affrights me, and I will have done with it!

ERINNA (*grasping his dagger*)

Alcæus! madman! stay thine impious hand:
Self-murder is the action of a coward;
Calm durance of life's ills true bravery;
Gird up thy soul to battle with the Fates,
Conquer by moral arms, not murderous steel.
Come forth, and let the stars restore thy senses;
I do compassionate thy wondrous woe,
And with my blood would bathe thy burning wounds,
If blood could heal the rents of Cupid's darts.

ALCÆUS

Angelic girl ! would there were more like thee.

Take me, my life is thine, since thou did'st save it.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The garden of SAPPHO's palace. A parterre of flowers and shrubs, centre. Enter CLEONÉ, right, plucks some flowers, and sings in a low voice ; PHAON follows, and pauses a little behind her. ALCÆUS enters and stands behind a myrtle, watching them.

CLEONÉ (*arranging a bouquet*)

In distant Lesbian vales

My bosom knew no sigh ;

There Sappho told me tales,

And sang me lullaby ;

But here no loving word,

No smiles illumine my breast,

And like an unfledged bird

Hurled from its happy nest,

In the folds of some dear bosom

Nestling, I'd hush my woes,

As bee within the blossom

Folds its wings in soft repose.

PHAON (*aside*)

And in this bosom thou shalt fold thy wings,

Sweet, homeless dove.

CLEONÉ (*looking up*)

Methought I heard a voice !
'Twas only some enamoured bird love-prating.

[*Sings.*

Were I a bird his cooing
I'd list with heart elate,
Leave him not long a-wooing,
But be at once his mate :

With him soar on the ether
Into the eye of day.
Or, nestling 'mong the heather,
Bill and coo with him for aye.

PHAON (*aside*)

How beautiful is love when first awaking
Within a young maid's breast ? How potent and
How wonderful its spell upon man's heart ?

CLEONÉ (*singing*)

In Lesbos Sappho loved me,
My bosom filled with blisses,
A gentle mother proved me,
Here Phaon only kisses.

From morn to even she
Enchains him with caresses,
Or, smiling lovingly,
Plays with his golden tresses.

I gaze ; they see not me,
Hear not my heart's wild throbbing,
And swift as dart I flee,
Lest they should hear me sobbing.

[*Weeps.*

Why should I weep and pine,
The gods our hearts dissever !
Alas ! he should be mine !
Our hearts be one for ever !

PHAON (*darting forward*)

And by the gods, they shall be one for ever !

CLEONÉ

I am her slave ! She'll kill me ! oh, she'll kill me !

PHAON

Fear not, sweet trembling dove ; she shall not touch
thee.

CLEONÉ

Thou'rt Sappho's husband, I her little slave.

PHAON (*opening his arms*)

Come to this bosom, and thou shalt be free.

[*She flies into his arms and hides her face in his bosom. A serpent lifts its head above the flowers, regards them, and disappears. Sappho, radiant with smiles, enters, left, plucks some flowers, and kisses them.*]

SAPPHO

Ye are the smiles that angels leave behind them
When they have ended their nocturnal vigils.
Sweet benedictions to the loved bequeathed
By unseen guardians of their earthly weal.

[*Walks about, caressing the flowers, and contemplating the scene with ecstasy.*]

How bright the god of day ! How fair the morn !
 And jubilant the nuptial choirs of nature ;
 The very air is drunk on marriage-music.
 O love ! O joy ! O sweet connubial bliss !
 O happiness ! for which Jove hath no name !
 My heart hath found such thrift in your pure light ;
 My soul attained to such full, lofty stature ;
 My thoughts so deep, so high, so broad have grown,
 And drawn around them such unearthly beauty ;
 My head seems circled by celestial spheres,
 And in ærial paths my feet are treading.

*[The serpent lifts half its length above the flowers,
 stretches forth its triumphant head, and hisses
 in her face. With a shriek she starts back, and
 falls. CLEONÉ darts away, and PHAON flies to
 her, followed by ALCÆUS, unperceived.]*

PHAON (*raising her from the ground*)

Sappho ! What evil hath befallen thee ?

SAPPHO

Is it gone ? is it gone ?

PHAON

What, dearest, what ?

SAPPHO

That serpent !

PHAON

Serpent !

SAPPHO

Ay, a serpent !

PHAON

Where ?

SAPPHO

There from those flowers a serpent, long and black,
And with Satanic triumph in its eyes,
Stretched forth its sable length with tongue extant,
And hissed into my face as but the devil,
Or his most perfect tutored imp could hiss.
I was so happy—lost in such sweet dream
Of nuptial bliss; it seemed that heaven was pouring
Into my soul all her divine elixir.
O Phaon! Phaon! keep guard on thy heart!
Be true—be faithful to thy nuptial vow.
This serpent is the devil who is come
To thrust his hideous shape twixt thee and me

PHAON (*with a forced laugh*)

O Lesbian Sappho! thou a poet art,
And to this serpent dost apply thine art;
Investest him with majesty of devil.

SAPPHO (*mournfully*)

Phaon, dost love me now as at Olympia?

PHAON

Ay, more; but why dost question thus thy Phaon?

SAPPHO

All things have their ascent and their descent;
And, therefore, have their culminating points
Whereon they poise, and tremble in their fulness.
At morn the sun casts forth a temperate glance;
At noon he burns; at even languishes.
'Tis thus with love: its morn is temperate;
Its noon is fire; its evening ashes.

PHAON

Beautiful.

SAPPHO

A month ago thy love was in its zenith.
Dost wonder if I fear it's crossed the line?

PHAON

When thou dost hear what gauntlets Phaon run
To reach Olympia at the crowning moment,
And proffer thee the first the myrtle-wreath,
Thou'lt swear his love can never quit the zenith.
Booted and spurred, and waiting for my courser,
I found my portal double-barred against me.
I cried for help—none dared to heed my cries.
Lashed by the Furies to a Hercules,
I flung my soul against the yielding door,
Flew to the royal stables, slew the groom,
Led forth the prancing courser, mounted him,
And sunk my spurs into his quivering flanks.
The way half won, a visored cavalier,
Wearing upon his arm a myrtle crown,
And holding high in air a glittering spear,
Upon a flying charger overtook me,
And, lifeless, struck my steed from under me.
I rose, unhorsed my foe, sprang in his saddle,
And, with the speed of lightning, gained Olympia.
It was the emissary of the Tyrant——

SAPPHO

Pisistratus! Forgive! 'Twas not a doubt
Of thee that crossed my Eden, but doubt's shadow—
'Tis gone, and all love's heaven is bright again.
Phaon, dear Phaon, if I sometimes seem

Like one smote by the plague of jealousy—
Unwitted, wide of wisdom, speak—smile on it,
As Sol upon the crazy cloud that beards him.
I love thee with such strength, such fine perception
Of all the subtle meanings of love's language.
Lay my soul's ear so close up to thy soul;
I hear the footsteps of thy thoughts ere born.

PHAON (*startled*)

Art thou magician, too, as well as poet?

SAPPHO

As oracles unlock the book of Fate,
And bare her sealed intents to mortal eyes;
So doth the poet oft unclasp man's heart,
And drag its inmost secrets to the light.

PHAON

The poet's powers above Olympus soar—
I swear to love the Lesbian evermore.

[*Eseunt, lovingly.*]

ALCÆUS

Perfidious liar! Sweet, smooth-tongued serpent! he
Just swore to love her slave eternally. [Exit.]

SCENE III.

A cabinet in the palace of PISISTRATUS. Enter PISISTRATUS and CONFIO.

PISISTRATUS

When wert thou last at Sappho's?

CONFIO

Yestereve.

I saw Cleoné dance before the Lesbian.

PISISTRATUS

How on the black-eyed beauty looked our Phaon?

CONFIO

Trembling and flushed, he watched her twinkling feet,
Then proffered her a rose which Sappho clutched,
And ground to powder 'twixt her dainty fingers.

PISISTRATUS

What spoke this action to thy mind?

CONFIO

Rank jealousy.

PISISTRATUS

Think'st Phaon of Cleoné is enamoured?

CONFIO

If Phaon of Cleoné be not smitten,
Pisistratus is not the king of Athens.

PISISTRATUS

The Lesbian's honeymoon is not all honey—
'Tis little past a month.

CONFIO

It is not that,
My liege; 'tis scarce three weeks of cloud and shine.

PISISTRATUS

Nor heaven nor earth can legislate for Cupid.
He will slip through the finest of their meshes,
Pilfer his neighbours' flowers before their eyes,
And laugh defiance in their tearful faces.

CONFIO

'Tis true, my liege.

PISISTRATUS

And what is true is right;
And what is right is true. If Phaon find
The Lesbian's floweret sweeter than the Lesbian,
Sure he should pluck it.

CONFIO

Thou dost reason well, liege.

PISISTRATUS

'Tis strange, a woman of such fine perception,
Such breadth and depth of mental penetration,
Of such high soaring genius as the Lesbian,
Should stake her happiness on such a man:
Inconstancy upon his face is stamped
As plainly as his nose.

CONFIO

It is, my liege,
And proves that love is blind.

PISISTRATUS

It does, by Jove !
And shows that poets are the worst of tailors :
They measure human by ideal forms,
And by the error make the illest fits—
Is th' Appius at anchor in the bay ?

CONFIO

Thy galley's there, my liege.

PISISTRATUS

Is the wind fair ?

CONFIO

'Tis.

PISISTRATUS

Bid the sails be set for Sicily,
And send the lovers on a pleasure trip.
Dost understand me ?

CONFIO

Ay.

PISISTRATUS

Then act upon
Thy knowledge. Thou dost know I love the Lesbian,
And am resolved to make her queen of Athens.

CONFIO

So thou hast told me twice before, my liege.

PISISTRATUS

Hadst thou slain Phaon on the Olympian plain
Instead the royal courser he bestrode,
And twined my myrtle with the Lesbian's laurel,
The Queen of Song had been my queen that day.

CONFIO

It was a piece of damnèd luck, my liege,
And proves how difficult 'tis to shoot game flying.

PISISTRATUS

I now will tell thee how to mend thy luck.
The music of Cleoné's little feet
Is promised me this hour; bid Phaon to me.
She will not take ten steps ere he'll go mad,
And, bounding forward, clasp her in his arms—
See that the Lesbian gaze upon the picture!
Mind, no mistake this time!

CONFIO

I'll mend my luck. [*Exit.*

PISISTRATUS

Why Jove hath in a female temple placed
A mind like Sappho's is anomalous.
In Homer only can we find her equal,
And on her brow I'd rather set my crown
Than on the head of Sheba's fairest queen.
Thrice for Athenæ's diadem I threw,
And won. I've thrown for Sappho, and will win.

Enter PHAON with roses.

Roses again? Thou'lt pluck my gardens bare
To deck thy mistress. Lov'st Cleoné well?

G

PHAON

More than my life, my liege.

PISISTRATUS

Thou wert a fool

To throw thyself away upon the Lesbian,
Who might thy mother be.

PHAON

There is a time

In life when all must play the fool, my liege;
And I have done it in my twentieth year.
Awakened reason tells me I can know
No bliss but with Cleoné.

PISISTRATUS

Thou shalt have her.

Get thee behind that screen: the charmer comes!

*[He steps behind the screen. CLEONÉ enters
timidly, trips up to PISISTRATUS, and kneels.]*

Welcome, my little black-eyed sylph, welcome—
Tears oozing through the curtains of thine eyes!
What's sprung the fountain of Cleoné's heart?

CLEONÉ

Alas! thou hast discoursed too much of Phaon!

PISISTRATUS

Cleoné is in love?

CLEONÉ

Alas! Alas!

PISISTRATUS

Wouldst like to go to Sicily with Phaon?

CLEONÉ

More than to go to Heaven it would rejoice me.

PISISTRATUS

Then dry thine eyes, my girl, and trust to me
For Phaon and a trip to Sicily.

Now let me list the music of thy feet,
And see the smiles of Hebe on thy lips.

[CLEONÉ dances with a step light as air. PHAON watches her with enamoured eyes, bounds from behind the screen, clasps her in his arms, and places his roses in her hair and bosom. SAPPHO enters, starts back, and rushes away.]

SCENE IV.

The piazza, as in Act II. Scenes II. and IV. SAPPHO, pale and dishevelled, rushes in from the garden, and falls forward. ALCÆUS follows, and pauses near her. ERINNA enters by door, left, and joins him.

SAPPHO (*half-rising*)

I fear I'm mad. So fiercely burns my brain;
So wildly leaps my pulse, I fear I'm mad.
Th' adulterous embrace mine eyes beheld;
The laughing fiends that pulled me by the hair
May be the phantoms of a brain disordered.

[*A pause.*]

Phaon Cleoné folded to his bosom
 Fondly, as if she were the world to him
 And Sappho were forgotten. O death! death!
 O madness! shut the horrid picture out! [*A pause.*
 Phaon, whom I have lifted to the poet's level.
 No! no! it is not true! my reason's blurred.

[*A pause.*

My little black-eyed slave, Cleoné,
 Whom on the market-place one day I bought
 For pity, bore her in mine own arms home,
 Fed, nursed her in my bosom as my child;
 That she could slay me with those charms that I
 Had snatched from base-souled trafficker in beauty—
 Ha, gods! she is my slave. Her life is mine!

[*Feels for dagger.*

'Tis there! I found it not when at her couch;
 How sweetly flowed the balmy breath between
 The rosy lips just parted on the pearls.
 That dimpled bosom, veiled with raven tresses—
 The picture slew my murderous intent!
 Tell me, ye gods! What is this thing called love?
 This something holding in it heaven and hell?
 This something reason cannot put aside?
 But which devours like dread Eumenides?

ERINNA (*struggling with* ALCÆUS)

Oh! I must speak to her, and with my blood,
 If needs be, staunch her wounds.

ALCÆUS

Restrain thy love.

The knowledge of our presence may prove fatal.
 She has a dagger, and may turn it on
 Herself. These two hours through the woods I've
 followed

Close on her steps to save her from self-murder.
Now flew she like the wind, a-crying 'Off!
Wild, laughing fiends! pull me not by the hair!'
Then on her face wept till the stones dissolved.

ERINNA

Thou shalt not hold me longer from the Muse!
[Runs to SAPPHO.
Sappho, sweet friend, my best beloved on earth,
Arise!

SAPPHO

What brought thee here! Grief has no friends.

ERINNA

I came to take on me thy wondrous woe.

SAPPHO

Weak, silly girl! wert thou as strong as Atlas
'Twould crush thee. Go! go! go! thy presence
prompts
Dark thoughts.

ERINNA

O Sappho! what hath changed thee so?

SAPPHO

Perfidy, wrong, the tortures of the damned;
Away! I want no soft thing near me now,
But something equal to my agony
That could cope with a million of Hercules.

ERINNA

Apollo's darling, where's that mighty love
That fired Olympian gods?

SAPPHO

Crushed, buried under
The ruins of my shattered idols. Go!
I must tear something as this heart is torn;
Break something as this heart is broken. Go! go!
[*Sinks down with her face concealed in her hands.*
ALCÆUS bears ERINNA out, swooning.

RHODOPE (*knocking*)

O baby, baby! let Rhodope enter;
Thy faithful Clitus would speak with thee, too.

SAPPHO

The sound of human voices startles me,
And gives my soul the ague.

RHODOPE (*entering*)

O sweet baby!

CLITUS

Apollo's pet!

SAPPHO

Cleoné, where is she?

CLITUS

The child is in her room.

SAPPHO

What doth she there?

CLITUS

I cannot tell thee: strange her conduct is.
Now sits she lost in thought, then sings, then weeps,
Then sings again in low, sad love-tuned voice

Just like a dovelet pining for a mate ;
This morn, with downy step, she sought the brook,
I followed after, watched her there.

SAPPHO

With him ?

CLITUS

With whom ?

SAPPHO

Go on !

CLITUS

Upon the bank she doffed
Her pretty clothes, then glancing timidly
This way and that, to see if ought beheld
Her beauty, tripped into the stream, and stood
Sprinkling with little hands her budding bosom,
The fairest of——

SAPPHO

Not praise, but knowledge give me !

CLITUS

The bath and labour of the toilet ended,
She hastened homeward, glided to her room,
The portal closed behind her, locked it, and
Began to sing——

SAPPHO

To sing ! go, bring her here !
Rhodope, go, and bid my soothsayer come !

[Exeunt CLITUS and RHODOPE.]

How will the traitoress meet my searching eye ?

That from her heart shall tear its damnèd secret,
Though all hell's triple bolts its portals bar!

[*To SOOTHSAYER, entering.*

What balm canst pour into my wounds?

SOOTH.

None, Muse.

SAPPHO

None! none! are heaven's doors closed against me,
too?

SOOTH.

'Tis sad.

SAPPHO

Sad! what?

SOOTH.

That Phaon loves Cleoné.

SAPPHO

Loves her! my slave, Cleoné?

SOOTH.

More than life.

SAPPHO

Fool! get thee gone, ere I make powder of thee!

[*Exit SOOTH. and enter CLEONÉ.*

She's beautiful, she's beautiful as spring.—

Oh! give me back, ye gods, my primal youth!

From memory tear the register of grief,

And only leave the record of that age

When the young heart clothes the world in its own
beauty!

CLEONÉ (*timidly*)

Sappho, dear Sappho, didst thou send for me ?

SAPPHO (*aside*)

How carefully attired to meet my Phaon !

CLEONÉ (*approaching*)

Sappho, my mistress, I await thy bidding.

SAPPHO

Wherefore so timid and so coyish now ?
Thou wert not so of late : why dost thou tremble ?
Come nearer, child, and let us talk together.
What festival demands this dress to-day ?

CLEONÉ

Festival !

SAPPHO

Why so carefully attired ?

CLEONÉ

Myself to please the Lesbian I attired.

SAPPHO (*aside*)

She's quick at lying, false as falsest hell !
Cleoné, come to me, come to these loving arms !
Be not afraid, my child, I am thy friend,
The truest, best that thou wilt ever find.
Hold not aloof ! I'd harm myself ere thee ;
Open these veins to serve thee ; thrust this bosom,
Naked, between thee and all venom'd darts. [*Sobs.*]
Cleoné, hast thou ever thought of marriage ?
That holy love that binds two hearts in one
By ties not made for mortal hands to break ?
And hast thou ever pictured to thyself

The pain of hearts thus bound, then torn asunder ?
The wasting pangs, the burning agonies
Of wounds that never heal, yet do not kill ? [Sobs.
Cleoné, dost remember thou the day,
Now near eleven years, thou first saw'st Sappho ?
Along the crowded slave-market she past,
And 'mong a hundred other little orphans,
Waiting for purchasers, beheld thee standing,
And paid the price. Dost thou remember it ?
When fever fixed its fetid fangs on thee,
Whose was the breast that through the weary night,
All self-forgetting, pillowed thy young head ?

CLEONÉ (*rushing into her arms*)

'Twas thine, dear Muse !

SAPPHO

There, there, ah ! well I knew
Thou wouldst not of thyself betray thy Sappho !

CLEONÉ (*drawing back*)

O Sappho ! what ?

SAPPHO

Thou know'st too well, Cleoné.
Why dost thou struggle in my loving clasp ?
Look in my face ! Why are thine eyes averted ?
Not timid thus wert thou when Phaon kissed thee.
Ah ! ha ! now thou art red ! Thy flaming cheeks,
Thy tied-up tongue, averted downcast eyes
Are of thy damnèd guilt the witnesses !
Hast thou no words ?

CLEONÉ

I know not what thou mean'st ?

SAPPHO

Know'st not and weep'st? Hold up thy head if
innocent,
Take off this gay attire, these flowers that
Do scarcely hide the serpent coiled beneath them!
Give me that wreath in memory of thy love.
Why dost thou spare the rose upon thy bosom?
In vain thou striv'st; give me the rose.

CLEONÉ (*crossing her hands on it*)

No, never!

My life, rather my life!

SAPPHO (*drawing a dagger*)

Thy life is mine.

Give me the rose or die.

CLEONÉ (*falling on her knees*)

O gods! O gods!

PHAON (*entering*)

Who calls upon the gods? A dagger drawn!

SAPPHO

The rose upon her breast the slave refused me.

PHAON

And she did well. Thou hast no right to take
From her the rose I gave her in remembrance
Of love that youth and innocence inspired,
And which outweigh a thousand times the laurel
When it entwines the faded brow of Circe.

SAPPHO (*letting the dagger fall*)

Phaon !

PHAON

I'll listen not ! Thy tears are false.
Turn not thy pitying eyes on her, Cleoné ;
False as her hand, her eyes will kill.

CLEONÉ

She weeps.

PHAON

Away ! she weaves new charms wherewith to slay.
[*Exit* CLEONÉ.]

SAPPHO (*falling at his feet*)

O Phaon ! Phaon ! Why this cruelty ?
What have I done to thee ?

PHAON

The dagger drawn.

SAPPHO

I drew it not before I saw—

PHAON

Saw what ?

SAPPHO

Thee place the roses in Cleoné's bosom.

PHAON

Sappho, thou liest.

SAPPHO

By the gods ! I saw

Thee lavish flowers and kisses on my slave.
'Twas in the cabinet of the Tyrant.

PHAON

Liar !

SAPPHO (*snatching up her dagger*)

By all the gods that make Olympus sacred,
Thou shalt not say that word again and live.
Plebeian ! have a care, lest down to Tartarus
I dash thy perjured soul.

PHAON

Cleoné, ho ! [*Re-enter* CLEONÉ.SAPPHO (*throwing away the dagger*)

O Phaon ! Phaon ! canst forget so soon
Thy holy vows before Olympian Jove ?
Dost thou not fear Apollo's angry darts ?
The dread Eumenides thou didst invoke ?

PHAON

I nothing fear except thy murderous dagger.

SAPPHO

I was mad, Phaon.

PHAON

Mad ! and art mad still !

SAPPHO

Not mad, but dying of the heart-ache.

CLEONÉ (*kneeling*)

Sappho !

PHAON (*pulling her away*)

Touch not the aspic ! It will sting to death !
Come hence, dear child, the dagger made thee free,
The presence of the dragon let us flee !
[*They run out. SAPPHO stretching forth her hands
towards them, falls forward.*

SCENE V.

*The garden as in Act III. Scene II. Enter SAPPHO slowly, with
her eyes bent on the ground. ALCÆUS follows, and pauses in
the shadows, right.*

SAPPHO

How still is all around, how mute the air,
And peaceful the repose of weary Nature.
Ah ! could I know such rest, sleep like these birds,
In sweet embrace of unembittered Hymen !
Alas ! such sleep will never more be mine !
The blissful slumbers of the nuptial pillow,
The golden-pinioned dreams that hover round
The marriage couch with love have flown for ever.
Whilome, I closed the portal of my heart,
Upon its fires piled ashes of dead dreams,
So high they could not stir beneath the weight ;
Then with this smouldering Ætna in my bosom,
I struggled up the rugged steep of fame,
And from the summit plucked the deathless laurel :

How proud was I upon that festive day !
How calm ! how self-possessed ! how great !
My soul had conquered, the world lay at my feet,
And to the gods I felt myself akin.

ALCÆUS (*aside*)

Had I possessed a thousand lives that day,
I'd given them all to save thee from thy fate.

SAPPHO

Kings, kingdoms, diadems I did refuse
For him—a thought ! it lightens through my soul !
To Lesbos I will send Cleoné back.
There in my palace, locked, she will forget,
And be forgotten. What ! if he follows her.
Then banish reason, gods ! and make me dumb
Alike to joy and sorrow !

CLITUS (*entering softly*)

O ye gods !

Help me to break to her the heavy news ?
Apollo's darling.

[*To SAPPHO.*]

SAPPHO

Clitus, art thou here ?

I was about to call thee, and unfold
A thought just born of my great agony.
Swift man my galley, take Cleoné home,
And in my palace lock her from the world.

CLITUS

Sappho, great Sappho—

SAPPHO

What! dost thou refuse?

CLITUS

My life I'd give to serve thee.

SAPPHO

What is 't then?

CLITUS

Alas! dear Muse, they've flown.

SAPPHO

Flown! Whither gone?

CLITUS

To Sicily.

SAPPHO

To Sicily! When? How?

CLITUS

In the Royal Appius, speeded by the Tyrant.

SAPPHO

Pisistratus! Art sure of it?

CLITUS

Ay, Muse.

SAPPHO

O hell! are all thy fiends unchained at once?
Away! arouse my slaves! take each a brand,
And stealthy as the devil creeps to mischief,

Set fire to Athens, burn her to the ground !
If by her Tyrant's hand this heart must die,
It shall find sepulchre in her proud ashes.
Away ! no, stop ! first bid my soothsayer hither ;
Then tell the Tyrant I would speak with him.
Now go ! not hobbling, but as lightning speeds !

[Exit, violently pushed.]

How have I fallen ! from what mighty height !

[To SOOTHSAYER, entering.]

What tidings from the Oracles dost bring me ?
Why stands't thou pale and trembling, like a coward ?
Speak out, ere my soul's lightning strike thee dead !

SOOTH.

Thy Phaon with Cleoné's gone for ever.

SAPPHO

For ever ! Gone for ever ! Say thou liest ;
That Phaon still is here, and loves but Sappho.

SOOTH.

To Sicily they've gone to live and love.

SAPPHO

Gods ! what is left for Sappho ?

SOOTH,

Leucaté.

SAPPHO

Leucaté ! Get thee gone, ere I go mad ! *[Exit SOOTH.]*
Jealousy, murder, robbery, and lust,
The horrid brood of hydra-headed sin
That from the deep abyss of flaming hell

H

Infect this world with poison-breathing breath,
Are crimes that blanch the cheek and freeze the blood;
But there another is, whose deadly hues
In contact brought with them, turns them to snow :
It is adultery : alone it does
What all the others do in combination :
It steals—it lies—deceives—it swears false oaths,
Betrays, stabs, slays whole hecatombs of hearts.

PISISTRATUS (*entering*)

Art thou declaiming for the Dionysia ?

SAPPHO

Didst ship my slave by right of usurpation,
As thou dost wear the diadem of Athens ?

PISISTRATUS

Not I, but Phaon.

SAPPHO

Phaon ! She's my slave.

PISISTRATUS

She's Phaon's now.

SAPPHO

And Phaon's mine, by Heaven

He's mine !

PISISTRATUS

He is Cleoné's.

SAPPHO (*with drawn dagger*)

Tyrant ! mock

Me not, lest thou dost learn that I can kill
A king.

PISISTRATUS (*aside*)

By Jove ! she hath Achilles' fire ;
I like it. 'Twill be useful to the State. [*To SAPPHO.*
Forgive my raillery ; I am thy friend,
And would not pain thy great heart for my kingdom.

SAPPHO (*falling at his feet*)

My friend, dost say my friend ? And thou wilt bring
My Phaon back ? My heart of heart. My life !
O do ! O do ! and I will be thy slave.

PISISTRATUS (*lifting her to his bosom*)

Thou shalt not be my slave, but honoured queen,
The brightest jewel in my diadem.
Let Phaon go to Sicily, and dwell
There with Cleoné, whom he loves as but
The young can love the young and beautiful,
Forget the peasant and be twice a queen.

SAPPHO (*recoiling*)

If thou didst proffer me a diadem
Sown with as many gems as heaven with stars,
And every brilliant in it were a sun
Eclipsing a million times the god of day,
I would not doff the laurel-crown to wear it—
Enthroned Cæsura ! seek no other queen.

PISISTRATUS

I'd rear no kings from that accursed stock ;
Her father, standing 'twixt me and the throne,
Proffered to step aside if I would wed his
Daughter.

SAPPHO

That man's a coward who would make
A woman's heart a stepping-stone to power.

PISISTRATUS

Vile courtesan of Lesbos, hence from Athens!

SAPPHO (*rushing at him with drawn dagger*)

Coward! take back that hell-born word!

PISISTRATUS (*dashing her off*)

Away!

Impious Muse!

ALCÆUS (*rushing forward*)

Ungallant monarch, draw!

[*They go out fighting. SAPPHO sinks down with her head bent forward, and her hands clasped in front of her knees. The poets enter severally, saying as they pass before her, 'We wish the Lesbian joy!' ANACREON reels in, followed by ALCÆUS, unperceived.*

ANACREON

At Olympia Sappho spurned
All the bards that for her burned;
Took to husband blooming Phaon,
As she took her lyre to play on;
But aweary soon of play,
With her slave he ran away:
Lesbian, don't bewail the boy,
I will wed thee still with joy.

[*He attempts to take her hand. ALCÆUS seizes him, and drags him out. Then returns.*

ALCÆUS

Sappho, beloved, what can Alcæus do
To mitigate the anguish of thy heart?

SAPPHO

Alcæus, good, high-souled Alcæus, nothing.
Death and the grave can only serve me now.

ALCÆUS

Time medicines the worst of earthly ills.

SAPPHO

Ages would not suffice to heal my wounds.
The jealousies of gods and men have slain me.

ALCÆUS

One sorrow oft-times swallows up another.
The young Erinna's dead—slain by thy woes,
And sudden changèd love.

SAPPHO

How blessed is she!
Her sleep, how sweet! her rest, how enviable!
The woes that crush like mountains in their fall,
The wrongs that kill can never reach her heart.
Death's icy sea lies 'twixt her and all ills.

RHODOPE (*entering*)

O baby, baby, courage take, and hope!

SAPPHO

Hope is dead.

RHODOPE

Hope liveth oft when seeming dead,
Comes back to life when life appears extinct.
The shipwrecked mariner sometimes finds escape
By swimming, floating on a plank, or hanging
Upon a rock amid the howling waves
Until some unexpected vessel, driven
Hither by friendly fortune, plucks him off:
Sometimes the shepherd under shady beech,
Sounding his pipe, beholds, affrighted but
Not hurt, the lightning split the tree behind him.

SAPPHO

Come to thy meaning by the shortest way.

RHODOPE

Of wise Stratonica thou oft hast heard;
Her cave, in ivy mantled to the lips,
Lies in a wood beyond the eastern gate.
There for deserted lovers she invokes
The good and evil sprites—and most of all
The foe of Cupid's mother, Hecaté.
In occult science put thy faith, and come.

SAPPHO

My limbs would fail to carry me half way.

RHODOPE

I bore thee once about in swaddling clothes,
And now, methinks, mine old limbs could support
thee.

ALCÆUS (*aside*)

How crushed is she; yet like some glorious ruin,
Beautiful, even in her desolation.

SAPPHO (*rising slowly*)

A thought! It comes like star out on the storm
To guide the mariner. I'll to Sicily!
And by the laws of Greece reclaim my slave!
To Sicily! ha! ha! to Sicily!

[*Exit, followed by RHODOPE and ALCÆUS. A scene
is drawn back, and discovers Athens on fire.*]

THE CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Sicily. Evening. A lawn near a cottage, lighted by the fires of Ætna. CLEONÉ in the attire of a shepherdess, her throat clasped by a rich diamond necklet, dancing with shepherds and shepherdesses to the music of PHAON'S pipe and other pastoral instruments. CLITUS and RHODOPE enter, disguised, and mingle among the dancers.

CLITUS (*drawing RHODOPE forward*)

In yonder little cottage dwell the lovers.
It is alone, and all the portals wide.
Fly to the galley; bid the Lesbian hither
To clutch the jewels Phaon stole from her
To deck the dusky beauty of her slave:
They all are there, locked in the golden casket,
Except the diamond necklet that now clasps
The tawny throat of yon muse-killing aspic.
That hoary shepherd, leaning on his crook,
Like a sieve, let all run through him at one tap.
So straight he led my thoughts into the cottage,
I there could lay my hand upon the jewels.
Put thy nose in a cachette in the wall—
Understandest? Now, quick upon thy legs,
While I enchain the revellers here with harping.

[*Exit RHODOPE.*

The lovers are romantic, and like music,
And by the cunning of mine art I'll hold them
Until the Lesbian trip their stolen joys.

[*Sets his harp down, and gazes fixedly at CLEONÉ.*
Behold yon swarthy snake! her little feet
Now twinkling on the very heart of Sappho—
The greatest heart Olympus ever launched.
Is she a thing to pull the eagle down,
And trail his heaven-fledged pinions in the dust?
O perfidy! O base ingratitude!
Hell has no name that's black enough to fit thee!
[*He plays. Shepherds gather around him, examine his harp, then dance to its music.*

SCENE II.

The sea-shore, lighted by Ætna. SAPPHO, closely wrapped in a long black mantle, and wearing a helmet and visor, enters from the galley, and walks to and fro.

SAPPHO

This is Sicilia! Theme of Homer's lyre,
And all so seeming fair one might not deem
She holds an Ætna in her heart: Scylla
And dread Charybdis rend her ears! It tells
How fair a brow dissimulation wears:
That smiles which play upon the lips are oft
Reflections of volcanic fires beneath. [*Pauses.*
Sicilia!

Thou art my sister, born to burning woes,
To speechless sorrows, and volcanic throes.

[*Walks to and fro with her eyes bent on an open letter, drops it, and gazes on the volcano.*

O hell of fires ! O burning soul that vomit'st
Thy molten woes full in the face of heaven !
Thou dost so stir the lava lakes locked in me,
Dashest such seething currents through my veins,
That to dwell with thee much would make me mad !
Could I so ope my heart, and strike space blind
With its red agony, how well were it
For me.

Enter RHODOPE.

What news, Rhodope, bring'st thy Sappho ?

RHODOPE

Why, baby, that in yonder little cottage
Thou seest nestling 'mong the loving vines
Thy faithless Phaon and Cleoné dwell.

SAPPHO

O all ye gods, uphold my reeling senses !
Am I awake ? Is this the earth whereon
I stand, or some fantastic realm of dream ?
Phaon and love dwell there, and Sappho absent ?
It cannot be, ye gods ! It cannot be.

O Venus, beauty of the skies,
To whom a thousand temples rise ;
Thou gaily false in gentle wiles,
And full of love-perplexing smiles—
O goddess ! from my heart remove
These wasting pangs and pains of love !

If ever thou hast kindly heard
A song in deep distress preferred,
Hear this ! and from the realms of air,
Propitious to my tuneful prayer,

Descend, thou bright immortal guest,
In all thy radiant charms confess'd.

Twice thou didst leave Almighty Jove,
And all the golden roofs above,
In answer to my Paphian prayer ;
Thy quivering sparrows clove the air,
And as they earthward winged their way
Like harps I heard their pinions play.

Celestial visitant ! once more
Thy needful presence I implore ;
In pity come, and ease my grief,
Bring my distempered soul relief ;
Quench in this bosom Cupid's fires,
Or give me all my heart desires.

Relent ! Unknit thy beauteous brow !
Clear up the storms of Hymen now :
In yonder cottage break the chain
Of lawless bliss, and let me reign ;
Give me back Phaon—all his love,
And never from me let him rove.

RHODOPE (*pulling her mantle*)

O Sapphie ! Sapphie ! pray no more to Venus,
The cruel, jealous, unrelenting goddess,
But haste with me to yonder little cottage,
Whose open doors invite thee to walk in
And take possession of the stolen casket.
A shepherd at the dance upon the lawn
Where, now, Cleoné's little feet keep time
To Phaon's pipe, told Clitus where to touch it.

SAPPHO

Mysterious powers that stand behind the veil
Pending between the present and the future,
Seeing, unseen, speak out ! and tell me if
There be in store for me a happy greeting,
Or if the arrow shall strike deeper home ?

RHODOPE

Come, baby, quick, or we shall lose the jewels.

[*Exeunt.*]

A Galley heaves in sight, and lands. ALCÆUS
disembarks from it.

ALCÆUS

Thanks to the gods, I am arrived at last,
Despite the tempests that have held me back
An hour behind my love ! There is her galley.
Sappho ! She answers not ; yet is she here,
The perfume of her presence fills the air
With incense sweet as breath of Araby.
What's this ! an open letter on the sand ? [*Reads it.*
‘Oh ! couldst thou know the burning pain
That wrings my heart, and sears my brain !’
’Tis Sappho’s hand ! the Lesbian’s burning words ;
[*Kisses it.*]

O precious jewel that dost tell me I
Am close upon the footsteps of the Muse !
Here are her tiny footprints in the sand !
Here has she stood, here told her woes to *Ætna*,
And from her red eyes drawn a sea of tears.
[*Throws himself on the sand, and kisses the footprints.*
O sweet impressions ! O angelic imprints !
Ye have removed whole mountains from my heart ;

It leaps again, ha ! ha ! its fountains play
In the bright sunlight of eternal day.
I am not mad, yet am I something like it,
This frenzied joyance might have birth in Bedlam ;
What ignis-fatuus lures me o'er the sea,
Following the flight of an inconstant star.
What is this potent spell that holds me down
Here like a giant arm ? alas ! Love is
My conqueror ; these twenty years I've vainly
Battled with him. Yon crimson hell whose breath
Blows out the stars, and strikes heaven blind, turns
pale
Before the *Ætna* burning in my heart. [Exit.

SCENE III.

The interior of the cottage. PHAON'S casquette and gloves lying on a table—his sword hanging on the wall—music and sounds of merriment heard without. Enter SAPPHO leaning on RHODOPH.

SAPPHO.

O happy threshold that dost kiss his feet !
O happy roof that shelter'st his dear head !
O happy walls that list his loving voice !
And are all woo'd and wefted with his smiles,
Oh ! let me clasp ye, fold ye to my heart,
And drink death from the poisoned cup of bliss.
O hallowed casquette that dost clasp his brow,
Lie on my bosom where his heart hath lain
So oft, discoursing love—the sweets of heaven.
O gloves ! protectors of the beauteous hands

That held me, swooning, in magnetic clasp,
Come to my bosom, too ! Lie there, and talk
Of joys that were, bliss nevermore to be.

PHAON (*entering suddenly*)

Who're ye ? What seek ye here ?

RHODOPE (*concealing the casket under her mantle*)

We are your friends,
And seek a gentle greeting.

PHAON (*seeing the cachette open*)

Ho ! thief ! thief !

*Shepherds rush in followed by CLITUS and CLEONÉ,
and seize SAPPHO and RHODOPE.*

SAPPHO (*tearing herself from them*)

Unhand me, villains ! Keep a peaceful distance.

PHAON (*to SAPPHO*)

What hast thou there ?

SAPPHO

Thy casquette and thy gloves.

PHAON

Put them where thou didst find them, and avaunt !

SAPPHO

Anon.

PHAON

What brought thee here ?

SAPPHO

Cleoné and

The stolen jewels.

PHAON (*snatching his sword from the wall*)

Liar! thief! robber!

CLITUS (*striking up his blade*)

Dastard! back.

SAPPHO (*throwing up her visor*)

Phaon, behold the thief!

PHAON (*staggering backward*)

Ye gods! tis Sappho!

SCENE IV.

*The Lawn as in Act IV. Scene I. SAPPHO rushes in dishevelled
and bleeding, followed by CLITUS and RHODOPH.*

SAPPHO

O mighty Gods! avengers of the wronged!
Where are your lightnings? Where your thunder-
bolts?

Have love, humanity, gallantry fled the earth,
And men put on the shapes of brutish beasts?
He smote me with the hand that once caressed me,
Did curse me with the tongue that swore me love—
Come death! Oblivion! ye are welcome now,

Since sacredness no longer holds a place
Within the sanctuary of man's heart.

[Sinks down, weeping.]

CLITUS (*smiting the ground with his staff*)

Thou dread Apollo! Guardian of the Muse,
And swift avenger of the wrongs of men!
Hurl double-barbèd arrows through his heart,
And send his perjured soul as far into
The flaming depths of Erebus as he
Has plunged this child into the sea of sorrow!
From damned abodes, terrific Circe come,
And from the beauteous form that now he wears
Transform him to a snake, the thing he is,
And couch him in the arms of green-eyed Scylla,
Or, licking the dust, let him creep down to hell.

Enter officers with CLEONÉ in chains and PHAON in custody, followed by a crowd of shepherds.

PHAON (*throwing his arms round CLEONÉ*)

To touch this angel let none venture more!
Although disarmed, not without arms am I;
Each limb in her defence becomes an arm,
And every arm a giant. Tremble not,
Belov'd; while Phaon breathes no ill shall touch thee!
Villains! look on this lovely innocent!
You men! and shackle beauty thus! Gail her
Sweet flesh? this only could a woman do!
Cleoné, come with me.

OFFICER (*stepping before him*)

Stir not a step

PHAON

Am I not free ? Is justice fled the earth ?

OFFICER

None are free when a penalty is pending.

PHAON

A penalty ! For what ?

OFFICER

For slave-stealing.

PHAON

Oh ! I will pay the ransom—pay it all !

OFFICER

A criminal should plead, not dictate terms.

PHAON

Are you so abject as to aid a monster ?

OFFICER

Thee I'll detain, and chain if Sappho bid it.

PHAON

Ancient, perfidious man ! dost thou not blush
Such crouching words to utter. Who is Sappho ?
Is she the umpire of the world ?

OFFICER

Her hest

Is law. He who could break a woman's soul
Upon a stolen slave, and to his crime
Add theft and profanation of her person,

In witness whereof speak those crimson drops,
Hath forfeited official clemency.

PHAON

Ah! ha! old man! Her Circe charms round thee
She's woven too! I'll try her spells again
On me.

OFFICER (*stepping before him*)

Aback! molest not Sappho.

PHAON

Thwart me not.

Toad! I will learn of what such hearts are made.
Ah! ha! thou trembl'st. It is thy turn now
To quake, and blanch, and grow weak in the knees!
So silent still! The Poet's lip so dumb?
Oh! throw away thy mask, and be thyself.
Thou Circe! killing with thy damnèd charms,
By what right dost thou here detain a Greek?

SAPPHO

The right that Greece gives to detain a thief.
The robbery of a slave is paid with death,
Give me Cleoné or abide the law.

PHAON (*startled*)

Dragon! thy ransom name.

SAPPHO

I ask no ransom.

I claim my slave by right of Grecian law.

PHAON

Thy dagger forfeited thy right to her,
But I will pay thy ransom!

SAPPHO

With my jewels ?
Officers, obey my order ; bring Cleoné.

PHAON (*to officer*)

By touching her you touch upon your death.
[*Falls at SAPPHO's feet.*
O Sappho, Sappho ! is thy bosom stone ?
Melts it no more to human grief and pain ?

SAPPHO

Ingratitude has slain the angel in me.
I claim my slave. Cleoné must come with me.

PHAON

Sappho ! what demon hand hath changed thy heart
To adamant ? Where is that tenderness,
That sweet, unfathomed sympathy with love,
That wove their fatal spells around my life,
And took Olympus captive ? Look at me !
Let me peruse thy face, and see if 'tis
The wondrous Sappho who bewildered worlds !

SAPPHO

Thou hast destroyed it all.

PHAON

'Tis Sappho's voice !
Its magic tones I hear.

SAPPHO (*aside*)

He loves me still !

PHAON

Fling to the wind whate'er I've done amiss,
And be to me again the godlike Muse!

SAPPHO

All wrongs I will forgive—forget.

PHAON

I knew it! [*Flings his arms round CLEONÉ.*]
Give me this child, my light, my life!

SAPPHO

Deceiver!

PHAON

No, that I am not! By the gods, I'm not!
The love I swore thee was not to deceive thee.
I loved thee, worshipped thee, adored thee,
But as the gods are loved, adored and worshipped.
The Lesbian struck the lyre. The world rose up
To listen. Peasants, poets, seers stood awed,
And monarchs laid their sceptres at her feet.
I then an humble, unknown shepherd-boy,
Untutored in the art of witchery,
Rose up and listened—worshipped with the rest.
The music of thy lyre entranced my soul,
And kindled in my bosom unknown fires,
The Athenian tyrant lured thee to his court,
Thee I beheld—inexplicable joy!
I told to thee my love. Thy smiles inflamed
And wove insidious charms around my brain.
I prayed for Hymen's chains—thou boundst them on
me.
Awhile their charmed weight intoxicated,

Then brought my heart a vague uneasy thirst
The ocean of thy love refused to slake.
If blame attach, proud muse, it is to thee.
Thou wert a full-grown woman, sane in mind,
And learned in sorcery—I, a boy, and mad—
Drunk on the amorous music of thy lyre.
My boyish flame thy duty was to quench,
Not feed with fatal fuel. Know, sad Lesbian,
That unions of such elements composed,
Like hot embrace of Auster with Aquilo,
Have no adhesive qualities to hold them,
And that the equal only truly love.
When first I looked upon this lovely child—
Sweet lily in the valley of my life—
Lifting her modest head no higher than
Her native vales, the fountains of my heart
Burst forth. Cleoné, dearest, plead our cause,
Unveil the liquid mirror of thine eyes,
That she within thine angel breast may look,
And all thy deathless love for Phaon see.

CLEONÉ (*kneeling*)

Sappho, sweet muse !

SAPPHO

Ungrateful slave ! arise !

CLEONÉ

O Sappho, Sappho ! generous, godlike Sappho !
Kill not thy child ; but give her light, life, Phaon,
Dearer than life !

SAPPHO (*seizing her with drawn dagger*)

Sweet, smooth-tongued adder, take
Thy venomèd tooth from out my heart, ere I
Uncage thy damnèd soul !

PHAON

Hold! Murderess!

Dragon!

SAPPHO

Plebeian! ditch-born reptile! hence!
 To take thy trial at the bar of Jove!
 O Gods! I'm mad, and know not what I do.
[Throws away the dagger, and falls at PHAON's feet.
 Phaon, forgive this frenzy; kill me not.
 For me there is no earth, no heaven, but thee—
 No joy, no light, no life. *[Joins their hands.*
 To thee I give Cleoné—take the child,
 And in the humblest corner of thy cottage
 Accord to me a resting place that I
 May see thee, hear thee, do thee menial service.
 O do! O do! and all my gold is thine.

PHAON (*smiting her*)

The she-wolf would I shelter, but not thee!
 Hold off thy hands, thy touch is venomous!
 Off! off! coil not thy folds around me!

SAPPHO (*clinging to him*)

Phaon!

O Phaon! kill me not! kill me not yet!

*[CLITUS tears her from him, and stretching his
 trembling hands above him, cries.*

CLITUS

Eumenides! O dread avengers come!
 With lambent curses pin this twain to earth
 Fast as the rivets of Promethian chains
 Bit down into the rock of Caucasus!

With hell-begotten breath melt their fine flesh,
And fling the ashes to the howling winds !
Down in these hollow bosoms where now sit
Their iron-bound hearts let slimy reptiles bask,
And croaking ravens build their brooding nests !
Eumenides, Eumenides, appear !

[*The Furies rush in with blazing breath. CLITUS
and RHODOPE bear SAPPHO out, right, swooning.
ALCÆUS enters, left, followed by sailors and
shepherds.*

ALCÆUS

Miscreant ! robber ! dastard ! where is Sappho ?

PHAON (*springing up*)

Gone to hell, I hope !

ALCÆUS

Perfidious villain ! draw, defend thyself !

[*They fight; PHAON falls.*

PHAON

Oh, I am slain ! Cleoné, I am slain !

O gods ! what agony, what agony !

Come with me, child ; there's bliss beyond the grave !

[*Dies.*

CLEONÉ

O Phaon ! Phaon ! leave me not alone ;

Come back ! speak, speak ! He moves not, he is cold.

O gods ! he's dead ! Strike me dead, too, ye Furies !

Swift on your flaming breath send me to Hades,

To join my love, my only friend on earth !

[*The Furies breathe on her. She falls on his body.
Dies.*

THE CURTAIN.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Ionis. The promontory of Leucati. Interior of the temple of Apollo. A statue of the god, centre, in the attitude of having just sped an arrow. Suppliants kneeling around it. Barbarians laying offerings at its feet. A high-priest with flowing beard and snowy locks, encircled by the sacred laurel, seen sacrificing at an altar. Enter SAPPHO, closely veiled, and followed by CLITUS and RHODOPH. With a mien of awe she approaches the altar.

SAPPHO

Priest of Apollo, deign to hear my prayer,
Who, urged by fate and obscure oracles,
Over the dangerous sea am hither come
To learn from thee the potent will of heaven,
And from this god implore benignant favours.

HIGH PRIEST (*turning slowly round*)

Tell me what favour of this god thou beggest.
Surely a maid like thee comes not to pray
The god for skill in vibrating the arrow
Like warriors ; nor implore his fruitful warmth
Like agricultors ; nor bewitching gift
Of fascinating animals with music
As harpers, minstrels oft are wont to do ?

SAPPHO

O no ! far different is mine errand hither.

HIGH PRIEST

Thou seek'st, perchance, within the sacred bath
Of Leucaté to cure thyself of some
Unconquerable malady of love ?

SAPPHO

Well hast thou guessed the object of my mission.

HIGH PRIEST

Thy name and country, the history of thy woe,
Ere I invoke the god, I needs must know.

SAPPHO

Alas ! I am the ill-starred maid of Lesbos.

HIGH PRIEST

The Lesbian Muse ?

SAPPHO

Alas ! the Lesbian Sappho,
Summoned to Athens by Pisistratus
With loftiest poets to contest the laurel,
Which unto me was lawfully adjudged.
I met a youth—the Adonéan Phaon—
And in my heart received the fatal arrow.

HIGH PRIEST

Was thy love chaste, and of the gods approved ?

SAPPHO

As chaste as snow that never touched the earth,
And at Olympian altars sanctified.

HIGH PRIEST

What came between thee and thy Paphian lord?

SAPPHO

My slave.

HIGH PRIEST

Thy slave!

SAPPHO

My little slave, Cleoné.

HIGH PRIEST

Alas! alas!

SAPPHO

I loved her as my child;
Him as the gods. To Sicily they fled,
Abetted by Pisistratus, the Tyrant,
Who willed to place his crown upon my head,
And maddened by defeat, struck at my heart
This dreadful blow.

HIGH PRIEST

O infamous! most foul!

SAPPHO (*kneeling*)

Venerable man! sage servant of the gods!
Ambassador of Jove, and priest of Phœbus!
Who in the ledger of thy memory
Hast registered a thousand tales of woe,

And knowest how to judge aright the heart,
Judge me, and lay my cause before Olympus.
Bare to celestial eyes this bleeding bosom
That never dreamed revolt against the godhead,
Or nursed infringement of its smallest precept.
Naked present my soul before its judges,
That they may see how much too large it is
For its allotted orbit. Its necessity
To tread the broader circuits lying outward,
And, therefore, comprehend why 'tis thus bruised
And broken, and why this fabled bath I seek.
If I have erred 'twas not from wish to run
Counter to sacred law, but want of light—
More light to lamp the ways that lead to heaven.
Pitying my woe, then, with these waters quench
The flame that, like a fiery serpent, lies
Coiled in this breast, this dreadful heartache ease,
Quicken these veins, revive this dying pulse,
Tinge these pale cheeks, give light to these dim eyes,
And nimbleness to limbs once like the fawn's.

HIGH PRIEST

The sacred bath of Leucaté alone
Doth in it hold the power of renovation.
Descend therein—be healed—rejuvenated.

SAPPHO

Since such sweet audience to my prayer thou givest,
Explain to me the nature of this bath
For which the oracles have sent me hither,
And in which thou dost put such wondrous faith.
Unfold to me the powers wherewith it quenches
The fires of Cupid, and a heartache ends
That neither foreign climes, nor prayers, nor tears,
Nor filling of the world with sighs can ease.

HIGH PRIEST

This would I do if power to me were given,
For I do pity thee with all my heart.
Arise, ill-fated Muse, and follow me,
And I will show to thee the bath wherein
Lovers, not less afflicted than thyself,
Have plunged, and quenched the gnawing fires of
Cupid. [Exeunt Omnes.]

SCENE II.

*A little jetty, reached by a secret path leading from the temple.
The white rock of Leucaté, jutting out over the sea. Enter
HIGH PRIEST, followed by SAPPHO, CLITUS, and RHODOPH.*

HIGH PRIEST (*pointing to the rock*)

Thou seest yonder snowy promontory
Jutting out o'er the sea. That is the rock
Of Leucaté. From it Deucalion
To cure himself of love for matchless Pyrrha;
Phobus, Phocension of the house of Codrus,
And Cephalus, the son of Dyonesus,
And sad rejected lover of Ptaola,
To heal love's wounds headlong impetuous leaped.

SAPPHO

O wretched me! Is this the sighed-for cure?
Ah! what else can it bring to me but death,
Since, knowing not the swimmer's art, I'll sink
A prey to dreadful monsters of the sea?

HIGH PRIEST

Why cam'st thou to this place thus unsubmissive?
Have faith!

SAPPHO

O wretched me! O wretched me!
Death, ghastly death, stares at me from the waves.

HIGH PRIEST

Let fear not overcome thy wits! From thence
Deucalion, and Cephalus, and Phobus,
Whose names and feats are written on yonder rock,
For benefit of chicken-hearted bathers,
Putting their whole trust in the gods, did leap,
And came forth healed and free from amorous pangs
As they had drunk the sea of Lethe dry.

SAPPHO

To me the gods will prove not thus propitious!

HIGH PRIEST

Submission wins the favour of the gods.
If, with a mind confiding in them wholly,
Unwavering and undoubting, thou dost leap,
Thou mayst expect a most auspicious exit.

SAPPHO

Attend me to the brink of yonder rock;
Thy holy presence will inspire me strength.

HIGH PRIEST

This are the servants of the gods forbidden.
Shut the door of reason, cast out fear and doubt,
Gird up the sinews of thy soul with faith,

Ascend the rock, fly to the brink, and leap,
While on my knees I'll supplicate the gods
To bring thee from the waters healed and cooled
As from salubrious bath in summer time. [*Going.*]

SAPPHO

Stay, holy man. Leave me not yet! Leave me
Not yet, but say—If in this sea I leap,
And Fate decree I never issue thence,
Whither shall I go? In what strange world abide?
What shape assume? What likeness there put on?

HIGH PRIEST

Such knowledge gods withhold.

SAPPHO

Then do we need
A higher godhead! [*Thunder.*]

HIGH PRIEST

Impious woman, list!
The anger of the gods!

SAPPHO

I bide their wrath.
Unfold to me the mysteries of that world
To which all go, and from which none return.
The grave—is it a couch of dreamless sleep,
Or one on which some future morn will break?

HIGH PRIEST

Seek not to know the secrets of the gods
Lest with just wrath they strike thee from this world.
[*Exit.*]

SAPPHO

Woe! woe! O woe is me! None give the key
That opes the portal of eternity;
And, like the blind, I hence must grope my way
With rayless eyeballs, feeling for the day!
[*Exit, followed by CLITUS and RHODOPE.*

SCENE III.

The rock of Leucath. The sea seen beyond. A tablet near the brink of the rock on which is writ, 'DEUCALION, CEPHALUS, and PHOBUS leaped from this rock to cure themselves of love, and came forth healed.' SAPPHO enters with a timid step, followed at a distance by CLITUS and RHODOPE. She pauses an instant before the tablet. Approaches the brink, looks over, and starts back with a shriek.

SAPPHO

Horror! O horror of the world of horrors!
The flames of Tartarus flashed in mine eyes!
Demonic visions, writhing souls stretched out
On lakes of fire with crimson eyeballs stared
Me blind, and rent my ears with horrid shrieks.
When reason reels how vast's imagination,
How wonderful the worlds it conjures up,
It rolls the ocean from his coral bed,
And bares the flaming heart of hell beneath.
[*She approaches the brink again, and starts back.*
Woe! woe! O woe is me! O woe is me!
I cannot of myself let go this world,
And trust to that of which I know nought of;

Yet must I do it ! It is Fate's decree !
Ionian hills, and blue-eyed heavens, give ear ;
Hearken, O hearken to my dying plaint !
I stand alone upon the shores of time
A pendulum vibrating 'twixt two worlds
That know me not. Bards who sued at my feet,
Monarchs who paved my way with diadems,
With love and glory turned their faces from me ;
Olympian smiles that wreathed my path whilome
Are in the hour of my dread need withheld :
The courage that spurned giants from its way,
As if they had been overweening pigmies ;
The faithless currents of my veins have flown,
My very pulses have forsaken me,
And left me like a fallen leaf adrift
Upon the river of oblivion.
The sorrows I have known have found no tongue,
The raptures I have felt I've faintly sung :
Words were too weak to hold the inspiration
With which the chalice of my soul o'errun.
And like sweet dew it back to heaven exhaled ;
But on the brow of time I've writ my name
Beyond the power of wrong to stamp it out,
Or envy to obliterate its glory ;
Ages unborn shall laud the Lesbian lyre.
Sages and children lisp the songs of Sappho,
While leaning from some star I'll list their praises.
Mine error speaks : of the gods I asked too much :
I asked the laurel and the myrtle twined :
They gave the laurel, but refused the myrtle,
And to their will submissively I bow,
Forgiving mortals and immortals now.

[A halo of light encircles her as she walks backward towards the brink.]

Eternity is opening on my vision,
Millions of white hands beckoning me away—
Adieu! Adieu! This is the last of earth!

[She turns, and leaps into the sea. CLITUS rushes over after her. RHODOPE, tearing her hair, hobbles to the brink. ALCÆUS, crying 'SAPPHO,' comes running up the rock, followed by his sailors.]

ALCÆUS

Where's Sappho? where the prize of Greece?

RHODOPE

There, drowned!

Alcæus, drowned and dead!

ALCÆUS

The Lesbian drowned?

Millions of Leucatés could drown her not!
The Lesbian dead! that Sappho cannot die
Is written in the book of destiny.

[Struggles with sailors.]

Avaunt! all mortal presence now is odious!
Hold off your hands! What now is life to me?
My lamp's gone out, my beacon set for aye!

RHODOPE

Let us embalm her memory with sweet tears!

ALCÆUS

Had I an ocean I would pour them out!
I loved the Lesbian more than Jove, than life;
Weep mother earth! weep thy most gifted child!
Weep, O ye rocks! Ionian hills, lament!

K

And all ye heavens put on the weeds of woe.
Withered is the laurel, shattered is the lyre :
But as the living lightnings light the sky,
Its deathless fires shall lume eternity !
Upon the earth there was no home for Sappho,
And with the angels she has gone to dwell.

[SAPPHO'S spirit, on angel's wings, appears above the
brink.

Look ! look ! behold her spirit clothed in light,
Heaven-pinioned, winging its immortal flight !
Open the windows of this house of clay !
And give my soul egress ! None will obey !
(Stabs himself.) 'Tis done ! O gods ! and I am on
my way
To join the Lesbian in the realms of day. [Dies.

TABLEAU. SOLEMN MUSIC. THE CURTAIN.

EPILOGUE.

The Muse, whose tale ye'd learned from classic pages,
And only seen through mists of distant ages,
So dim and far she seemed a fabled sprite,
Moving upon life's stage ye've seen to-night ;
A creature like yourselves of flesh and blood,
With the same passions, hopes, and fears imbued.
The queen of song, ye've seen the poets greet
Her as their peer, kings suing at her feet.
Upon Olympus' highest summit stand,
Amid applauding Greece serene and bland,
And to a brainless shepherd give her hand ;
Then roving down the vales of dark despair,
A moaning maniac, tearing her long hair,
By evil spirits towards destruction driven,
And calling on the god whom heaven had not yet
given.

Ye've seen her stand amid the pitiless storm
Of fate, encircled by no loving arm,
By height and depth of soul removed as far
From human sympathy as some lone star,
Or comet burning its mysterious way,
And mid it all have only heard her pray
For light to guide her toward Olympian day ;
Then turn deaf ears to envy's classic lies,
And judge her by the senses of your eyes.

Matrons and maids ! All who have truly loved !
Whose lovers, husbands, all have faithful proved,
Whose watchful cares, and smiles, and godlike worth,
Have made your homes the Edens of the earth,
Think of the wife desert, the loved one flown,
And make the ill-starred Lesbian's case your own :
Freely and tenderly let your heart founts flow,
And help her as you can to bear her woe.
Drive slander from your doors, it is a thief
That brings its thousands every day to grief ;
Falsehood abashed, from social altars send,
And with true hearts a sister's cause defend.
Remember, Sappho lived in other times,
When Jove rewarded virtue, punished crimes ;
When woman had no friend to take her part,
And calm the troubled waters of her heart,
To lend a patient ear to all her woe.
If wrong assail you now to Christ ye go ;
Who turns you not away on any grounds,
But pours the balm of Gilead in your wounds.

Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. with Steel Portrait of the Heroine.

SAPPHO:

A Tragedy in Five Acts.

By STELLA (ESTELLE A. LEWIS),

AUTHOR OF

'RECORDS OF THE HEART,' 'THE PEARL OF POLAND,' ETC.

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, and at Washington, U.S.A.,
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(London) HOUR.

'This is a Greek subject. To depict the life of Sappho dramatically is an ambitious attempt; and Stella has not shrunk from the most ambitious treatment of it. Into Sappho's character she has thrown herself with very much power, through all her phases of passion and jealousy and pain to her suicide at the fatal rock of Leucaté. The work is dedicated to Mme. Ristori.'—(London) ECHO.

'It contains many fine passages and scenes of intense passion.'—(London) PICTORIAL WORLD.

'Out of the scanty records of the Lesbian poetess, "La Stella," the well-known author of "Records of the Heart," has constructed a powerful and effective story, and created a drama which, we believe, only needs to be put upon the stage to obtain a large amount of popular favour. From the opening scene at Sappho's house, at Mitylene, to the "last scene of all," at the fatal rock of Leucaté, the interest of the tragedy is never allowed to flag. This drama is rich in passages of intense passion and vigorous action, and is filled with interesting situations and numerous opportunities for stage magnificence and scenic embellishments.'—(London) CIVIL SERVICE REVIEW.

'It is pitched in a lofty strain, and shows much strength of wing in the higher flights of poetry. There is much fine imagination and much beauty in the work, and no one can fail to discern the unusual culture, the genuine poetic power, and the easy mastery over poetic diction possessed by the author of *Sappho*.'—(London) SCHOOL BOARD CHRONICLE.

'Vigour, variety, and incessant motion are the principal characteristics of Stella's tragedy. It recalls *The Stranger*, *Pizarro*, and *The Robbers*. It is a drama of marvellous interest and energy, and has received very warm encomiums on both sides of the Atlantic.'—DUNDEE ADVERTISER.

'In *Sappho* Stella has spread her wings for a bold flight. This time she has bound herself to a classic model, and the power with which she throws her nineteenth century muse into Sophoclean forms would of itself render the tragedy noteworthy. In structure as well as in spirit it conforms to the rules of the Greek stage. The strength and vigour of the Greek drama are wedded to later charms of elegant fancy and refined sentiment. Sappho's, of course, is a love story; and though told in verse,

it kindles an interest in the minds of the reader that carries him on gaily and pleasantly as through the best novel of the season. When the tragedy has been read for its plot and incident, we can turn back upon it to appreciate calmly the many poetic beauties with which its pages are studded.'

EDINBURGH COURANT.

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(Dublin) SAUNDERS'S NEWS LETTER.

'To write a five-act play of interest is universally admitted to be a feat of great daring, and requiring much ability; but to give to the world a tragedy in blank verse, and cast in a true classical mould, is an achievement which very few persons can boast of having accomplished. And yet this is what an American authoress, known in the literary world as "Stella" (Estelle Lewis), has just effected in a very superior manner. Her *Sappho* is a work of great merit, written with unusual vigour, replete with classical allusions, and founded on a series of stirring incidents. The authoress has evidently drunk deep of the Castalian spring, as her poetry is everywhere modelled on the writings of the most admired Greek and Latin authors.'

(Paris) GALIGNANI'S MESSENGER.

'Sappho, the poet of Mitylene, the beloved of Alcæus and the hated of Phaon, was one of the greatest women of antiquity. Her poetic genius was transcendent, and captivated kings and the greatest personages of her time. She lived about the fifth century B.C., and was contemporary with Pisistratus, the tyrant, who invited her to Athens to contend with the poets at the Dionysia for the Laurel Crown, which she won. To interpret the nature of such a woman, to make her speak intelligibly to us across the Ages, to bring her within the reach of our humanity, to inspire us with her wondrous sorrows, is the object of Stella's tragedy. We have read and re-read this tragedy with increasing interest. It is all aglow with passion and poetic fire. Its pages are studded with the most beautiful and original thoughts. We prefer Sappho's definition of poetry to any given by the schoolmen; and, if we are not much mistaken, future philosophers will consult Stella's *Sappho* for definitions of the passions.'—(Paris) AMERICAN REGISTER.

'Heretofore Sappho has been treated as a myth or a monster. In this piece she is brought within the reach of human sympathy and comprehension. We see her and hear her, and partake of her joys and her sorrows. The plot is skilfully constructed and the characters distinctly drawn. Each has his individualism, yet moves in harmony with the whole.'

NEW YORK HOME JOURNAL.

'A dramatic poem on Sappho is a bold venture. Little is known of the heroine, and an estimate of the high quality of her inspiration, which held all Greece bound as by the spell of an enchantress, can be formed only upon an examination of such scanty fragments of her works as chance to have survived the depredations of that notorious old thief, Time. Estella has woven out of the slender incidents of the career of the Lesbian poetess a five-act tragedy of rare imaginative power and poetic fire. If space served, we would fain cull some passages which are instinct with the eloquence of living passion, that might fitly call into exercise the mature histrionic powers of such a queen of the drama, even, as Ristori.'

(London) WESTMINSTER CHRONICLE.

'Its plot is well woven, and full of dramatic situations and stirring incidents. The action does not lag, but increases in interest till the finely-wrought denouement on the rock of Leucaté, the "Lover's Leap" of classic Greece. There is throughout a well-sustained energy, and a prolific imagination which exhibits itself in both eloquent declamation and forcible, and oft-times elegant as well as appropriate, poetic imagery, that gives an irresistible charm to the poem, and secures the reader's interest to its conclusion.'

(Manchester, Eng.) ODDFELLOW'S QUARTERLY MAGAZINE.

'Sappho's Prayer to Jove in the first act is couched in language of great beauty.'—(London) WEEKLY INDEPENDENT.

'It depicts the fame, love, and despair of the famous Sappho in glowing characters. In the first act she is surrounded by her pupils and friends at Mitylene, to whom she reveals her passionate longing for love, and tells a dream, which has, of course, a hero. In the second she contests the laurel with the bards of Greece, and at Athens wins the laurel crown and a husband—the youthful Phaon, respecting whom she had had a remarkable dream. In the third act we have the marriage festivities, in the midst of which the fickle Phaon falls in love with a young and beautiful slave, whom Sappho had bought in her infancy and reared with tenderness. In act the fourth we have the desertion of Sappho. Her alternate fits of relenting love, despairing woe, and fiery rage are described with passion and pathos. Phaon is killed in a duel. And in the fifth act

we have the death of the "Lesbian Muse," who springs from the rock Leucaté into the sea, and afterwards appears as a spirit on angel's wings. A variety of classic characters, amongst whom are Solon, the Athenian Lawgiver; Æsop, the inimitable Fabulist; Anacreon, the Lyric Poet, are ingeniously worked into the piece without any palpable anachronisms.'

KENTISH MERCURY.

'Stella's *Sappho* is a powerful production; beautiful in expression and harmony. Two lines of it are worth a whole book of the senseless rhymes of the time.'

TORQUAY TIMES.

'Estella Delmonte Lewis, the Sappho of America, is in Paris, fêted, flattered, crowned, and covered with bouquets by the *grand monde* of the gay capital, and enjoying the society of Alexandre Dumas, *filz*, and other literary celebrities. Her tragedy of *Sappho* is pre-eminently a success. A second edition of the work will presently appear in London, and a translation into Italian is commenced.'

(Philadelphia) EVENING TELEGRAPH.

(English Topics.—From our own London Correspondent.)

'It is generally admitted that *Queen Mary* would not survive the crux of representation for a week, unless the beauty of its language should win popular favour. Stella is more happy in the finished character of her work, for I hear that it is not improbable that her five-act tragedy of *Sappho* will be brought out at one of the London theatres. The rhythmic flow of the poem ranks it as a masterpiece of excellence in composition, and there are numerous passages that need classic delineation to give them at once their full force. The pleading, for instance, of the heroine to her lover, when she has consented, if e'er she wed again, that her father's friend shall be her bridegroom, would call into exercise a high order of histrionic ability to do it justice:—

"Alcæus, good Alcæus: bear with me;
Be patient with my foibles and my fancies:
I am a wayward child—ill understood
Of men, and oft a stranger to myself;
But, wherewithal, endowed with love of justice
And duty, Jove alone can comprehend.
I would not wrong thee for the wealth of Croesus,
Nor trifle with thy great heart's noble passion;
But, urge me not to don the nuptial chain;
It was so heavy in my younger days;
So galling wore into my soul's fine quick,
I fear I could not wear it with meet grace
Ere friendly time have medicined its wounds;
Meantime, let me lean on thy generous love,
And look up to thee as my demigod.
I am so lonely in this world of woe;
So many faithless reeds have broke beneath me,
That I could worship one firm, faultless staff."

PHILADELPHIA DAILY TELEGRAPH.

'Stella went abroad in 1865 to procure authentic information upon the somewhat mythical life of the Lesbian poetess, and has since devoted her time and talent to study in the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Impériale, and the Vatican Library. The result is one of the finest dramas of modern days.'

NEW YORK DAILY GRAPHIC.

'*Sappho* is a tragedy by Stella, already well known as the gifted authoress of *Records of the Heart* and *The King's Stratagem*; or, *The Pearl of Poland*. The plot is well conceived; and the subject is handled with a vigour, and withal a delicacy, of which we cannot speak too highly, seeing that the antecedents of the Lesbian will scarcely bear a close inspection. The play contains fine descriptive pieces; while many of the lyrical passages are gems in their way. The authoress evidently is possessed of great powers of imagination, with a wonderful insight into the workings of the human heart. Seldom have we found pathos and passion so artistically blended.'

GUERNSEY STAR.

'The literary topics of the time are Tennyson's drama of *Queen Mary* and Estelle Lewis' *Sappho*. Both may be seen upon the boards of London theatres in the course of the next winter season. *Sappho* sets sail to Athens; there she wins the laurel of the Olympian festival, and seeing the fancy of her former vision, forgets utterly her vows to Alceus. Kings, tyrants, legislators, and bards woo her, all alike in vain; she weds Phaon, who quickly rewards her by seducing and eloping with the more lovely slave. Stung to the quick, but yet not cured of her fatal enchantment, *Sappho* pursues the guilty pair to Sicily, followed speedily by the faithful lover. There is she insulted, foully scorned, and brutally struck by Phaon; until, seeking the altar of a local divinity, who possesses the power of rendering devotees oblivious to mortal amours, she plunges into the sea by direction of the high priest, and finds oblivion in the arms of death. The form and language of the play are essentially dramatic, and the scheme is powerfully and skilfully developed throughout.'

NEW ORLEANS WEEKLY BUDGET (London Correspondent).

'*Sappho* is the most beautiful and original drama written in modern times. It is thought sculptured.'

NEW ORLEANS HOME JOURNAL.

'Stella, as everyone knows, is Estelle A. Lewis, a native of Baltimore. The theme of *Sappho* is love; and this many-sided and most universal of all subjects is handled with all of a woman's earnestness and a poet's vigour. As an artist, Stella has neglected nothing; even visited Mitylene and the rock of Leucaté, so as to be perfect in details, and gave eight years to the evolution of her idea.'

(South Carolina) COLUMBIA REGISTER.

'Of Stella's dramas we first read *The King's Stratagem*; or, *The Pearl of Poland*, and thought some of the passages strong and marked by great poetic beauty; but after reading *Sappho*, we could scarcely remember *The Pearl of Poland*. *Sappho* is grand—it is beautiful! The author's fame is safe though she never strike another note on her magical lyre. Oh! the power, the grandeur of music and beautiful words combined in what we call poetry.'

(West Virginia) **BERKELEY TIMES**.

'It is a work of much power, clearly conceived and skilfully executed.'

THE CAPITAL (W.D.C.)

'Stella (Estella Delmonte Lewis), *The Female Petrarch* of the great Lamartine, and *The Sappho of America* of other celebrated critics, who at the age of thirteen was the author of a volume of poems, entitled *Records of the Heart*, has just published in London her tragedy of *Sappho*. The poem, as a poem, is a fine one, full of carefully-studied passages that have in them the richest qualities of harmony and beauty.'

BOSTON CONGREGATIONALIST (London Correspondent).

'An eminent *savant* is at work upon an Italian version of *Sappho*, the latest dramatic poem of Estella Delmonte Lewis, of Baltimore.'

ANGLO-AMERICAN TIMES.

'We consider it superior to all the dramas in the language outside of Shakespeare's works, and we are not by any means sure that it has been equalled by any of the ancient Greek dramatists.'

(Frederick, Maryland) **TYLER'S REVIEW**.

'Stella's *Sappho* is a rich, glowing passion-flower, velvet-petaled and burning at the heart with tropical fire and beauty. It has received the heartiest appreciation and most loving welcome from the English and American press. *Sappho* is an ambitious, loftily-conceived work, purely and nobly executed, and we must congratulate our countrywoman that she has won so distinguished a name among the many aspirants for the laurel of dramatic authorship. There is so much that is majestic, so much that is delicate in this version of the tragic history of *Sappho*, that I am at a loss what passages to cull for quotation.'

(Atlanta, Georgia) **SUNNY SOUTH**.

TRÜBNER & Co., Ludgate Hill, London; MORRIS PHILLIPS & Co.

3 Park Place, New York; and all Booksellers.

'Stella, the author of this tragedy, is Estelle D. Lewis. The piece has lyrical emotion; the versification is smooth and flowing, and some of the scenes are designed with much power. The final monologue, which we copy, is most successful.'

NEW YORK TRIBUNE.

'Our readers know that the name "Stella" conceals that of Estelle Delmonte Lewis, a lady whose poetry has long since won for her a European as well as an American reputation. Pisistratus, king of Athens, invites the chief poets of Greece to attend the Dionysia and there contend in song for a laurel crown; and he sends a galley to bring the honoured Muse of Lesbos. Poets, princes, and spectators meet before the temple of Zeus, and after a Bacchanalian chorus and a "Phallic procession" (we miss the Phallic hymn, which would have come in with fine effect), the contest of the bards begins. Anacreon sings of wine and the dance; Theognis of the shortness of life; Solon of justice; Alcæus of love and beauty, and the rest of their favourite themes. Last of all, Sappho sings the absorbing passion of love, and follows her first song with a hymn to Venus. The reader, even without the poem, can imagine how admirably this scene is fitted to show the richest and most varied powers of a poet who is both lyricist and dramatist; and how exquisite an effect might here be produced upon the stage.'

BALTIMORE BULLETIN.

'The general idea of the tragedy—which is Sappho's failure in combining a love passion with that of poetry, or as Stella calls it, "of interweaving the myrtle successfully with the laurel"—is admirably wrought out. Sappho has a high mission, but she is led away from it by Syren enchantments, and becomes a wretch and a suicide. It is as if the hero of "Excelsior" had yielded to the maiden's invitation, had "laid his weary head upon her breast," paused on his journey, and lost his glorious identity for evermore. So the Lesbian poetess, the grandest woman of Greece, is degraded by her attachment to an unworthy object into a love-sick girl, and feeling her degradation, has no escape but in death.'

DUNDEE ADVERTISER.

Just published, Third Edition.

THE KING'S STRATAGEM;

OR

THE PEARL OF POLAND,

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

By STELLA.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"The King's Stratagem" has symmetry, grace, and tenderness; and a strongly accentuated individuality; and is worthy of the reputation of *La Stella*.—HOME JOURNAL.

'It complies with all the conditions of legitimate tragedy.'
(London) EXAMINER.

'It is a play more fitted for the study than the stage.'
WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

"The King's Stratagem," from the pen of a gifted lady, under the *nom de plume* Stella, brings out into deep relief the terrible nature and punishment of crime, and the ennobling effects of true, constant love.—VICTORIA MAGAZINE.

"The King's Stratagem" was intended for the stage, and with good acting would be popular, as there is no lack of incident, and the story affords plenty of opportunities for theatrical effect. The plot turns upon the loves of Christine, the Pearl of Poland, and Milo: the king of the country has the hero assassinated in order to steal his bride, but she is saved from her intended fate, and retribution falls upon the ravisher. The best passage, as far as writing is concerned, is the bishop's speech in the last scene of Act I.—(London) GRAPHIC.

'It is not often that we have seen anything so exquisite as this five-act tragedy.'—SATURDAY REVIEW.

'A tragedy of undoubted energy and merit.'
ILLUSTRATED REVIEW.

"The King's Stratagem; or the Pearl of Poland," is dedicated to those who "believe in the intervention of Heaven between mortal belligerents." We have ourselves looked through its pages, and confess there is much to ward off dulness. Although the piece is professedly "a tragedy in five acts," there are scenes of excellent comedy sometimes appearing unexpectedly in the midst of more serious matter. For instance, we have a dialogue between Stanislas, Bishop of Cracow, who is supposed to be afflicted with a grief which has turned his hair suddenly white, and his servant Jean. The circumstances are sombre enough in themselves, but the author has managed to treat them

with much lightness and vivacity. We think our readers may now form some idea of the peculiar and quite exceptional qualities to be found in a very curious volume. We could wish that poetry would, at least, be always as amusing as the "Pearl of Poland."—*GLOBE*.

"The King's Stratagem" is a tale of love and crime forcibly conducted to its tragic *denouement*. The plot is clearly conceived, the scenes well posed, and the characters drawn with a vigorous hand. The tone is high, and scattered through the piece are passages where the language rises to dramatic dignity.

WORCESTER JOURNAL.

"The King's Stratagem," from the pen of Stella, the most talented of the American poets, is a dramatic version of one of the most tragic incidents of Polish History. It is full of striking positions, and if well put upon the stage would be popular.—*RHYL RECORD*.

"The King's Stratagem; or the Pearl of Poland" (second edition), is marked by skill of execution and a keen eye toward dramatic effect.—*NEW YORK INDEPENDENT*.

'An American lady, La Stella (Estella A. Lewis), now living in England, has published through the house of Trübner & Co., of London, a poem entitled "The King's Stratagem; or the Pearl of Poland." It is a tragedy in five acts, and relates the story of Boleslas II., King of Poland; his abduction of Christine, the "Pearl of Poland," and daughter of Stanislas, Bishop of Cracow, upon the eve of her marriage with Pierre Milo, a Polish nobleman; and the means resorted to by the bishop to effect the release of his daughter from her imprisonment in the royal palace. The book is dedicated "to those who love truth and justice, and believe in the intervention of Heaven between mortal belligerents." In the poem Heaven is represented as alarmed at the crime committed by the King of Poland, and it at once sends to earth the ghost of Pierre Milo, who was murdered on his nuptial night by the favourites of the king, to assist in restoring Christine to her father. Says the poetess in her prologue:—

"To lift up Truth from under Perjury's heel,
Behold the sepulchre her gates unseal;
Dead bones around them wrap their dust and walk,
And stand before a mighty king and talk."

'While the poem proves to be an interesting narrative, and many of its passages are meritorious, the ghostly element is rather too strong, even for people with active imaginations, who do not object to ghosts. Physiologists, and others curious in such matters, will be interested in reading of the manner in which Milo left his grave:—

"I stood right on the border of the grave
And looked down in the coffin, which was lidless,
And saw with my two eyes wide open, sire—
Wide open—and clear of vision as they're now—
The fine dust stir, then rise like ashes when

A softly breathing zephyr blows into them ;
 Then settle back upon the dry white bones,
 And take the form of purple-threaded gauze,
 Whose fairy meshes 'gan to pulse and throb ;
 And crimson streams, no larger than the veins
 That interline the pinions of a fly,
 Along the violet-latticed rays to roll
 Into a central fountain in the breast—
 Right in the spot where, sire, once beat the heart—
 The noble, youthful, palpitating heart
 The bosom heaved—the eyes into their sockets leaped,
 Flashing like stars amid the crépuscule—
 The lips did smile—the hair put on its hues—
 And Milo rose—and stood up in the grave ! ”

‘The reader will perceive that a woman who can write like the above, is capable of producing a lasting poem. No obstacle is too great for her to overcome.’—NEW YORK ALDINE.

‘A new five-act tragedy by the popular authoress of the “Records of the Heart” is certain to attain a certain amount of popularity, whatever its merits may be.

‘The story which she has selected for dramatic treatment, although dealing with historical personages, can scarcely be deemed to have any foundation in fact, and we cannot help thinking that La Stella has lost a legitimate opportunity of producing a good standard drama, both for the stage and the study, by introducing incidents not merely impossible, but repugnant to reason. The introduction of spiritual agency into the drama is, undoubtedly, warranted by high example; but even Shakespeare does not dare to ascribe the actions of humanity to his ghosts—they come and go like guilty *thoughts*, and any one who attempts to go further is in danger of taking that one step which separates the sublime from its contrast, is in danger of reducing the tragic to the burlesque. Its spectral *dramatis personæ* is the one fault we find with “The King’s Stratagem.” The plot is clear, dramatic, and flows swiftly and uninterruptedly to its close. The characters—even the minor ones—are strongly individualised; they are not mere lay figures distorted into all kinds of postures to suit the showman’s wants; the language is vigorous and energetic, and the incidents effective and dignified. The difficulty of selecting from a poem—for such title this drama is worthy of—is well known; there are many starry thoughts which will serve to sustain, if they do not extend, the reputation of La Stella, and many fine sentences beaten out on the anvil of imagination; but disconnected passages no more afford a faithful idea of an entire play than did the one brick of the *Scholasticus* show what the house was like. At haphazard, however, we take the third scene in the first act, when Stanislas, the good old Bishop of Cracow, purposes to confide his only child, his beloved daughter, “the Pearl of Poland,” to Lord Milo:—

STANISLAS. It must be so, alas ! it must be so
 This selfish heart must render up its idol,
 The dearest Penates of my household,
 For eighteen years I’ve been a faithful shepherd,
 Watching the fold of one dear little lamb,

And fortifying it with love and prayer ;
 For eighteen years have studied how to shield
 Its helplessness against the wind and wave—
 The wolf that is the scourge of bleeding Poland.
 The time is come that asks a change of shepherds.

(LORD MILO enters.)

I am so glad, my lord, to meet thee here,
 Where there's no ear but thine and heaven's to hear
 The overflowing of my full-pent heart.
 A solemn matter have I to unfold
 Concerning one of whom thou ne'er hast heard,
 But who is dearer to me than my life.

MILO (*aside*). He's going to talk to me about his daughter,
 And thinks I know not of so fair a creature ;
 Dreams not I've scaled the wall a thousand times—
 To see her galloping beneath the limes—
 Laviash upon her charms all powers of art,
 And wear her beauteous image on my heart.

(To STANISLAS.) Thy sweet confessional, my lord, I'll list.

STANISLAS. Milo, my friend, couldst thou a shepherd be ?

MILO. I've had no practice in the fold, my lord.

STANISLAS. Milo, give ear ! Just eighteen years ago
 God trusted to my keeping a white lamb,
 So tiny, tender, and so beautiful,
 I feared to touch it with my mortal hands.
 For eighteen years I've been its prayerful keeper—
 Tended it, nursed it in my bosom till
 It is become a part of my own life.
 Milo, I want a shepherd for my lamb—
 A tender, watchful, prayerful, loving shepherd."

'For how Milo accepted the trust gleefully, and for the terrible
denouement of the tale, we must refer the reader to this remarkable
 work itself.'—MIRROR.

Tenth Edition, Illustrated.

RECORDS OF THE HEART,

And other Poems.

BY STELLA.

'The contents of this volume bear no traces of affinity with any of the popular schools of recent English poetry. The poetess gives no sign of the idolatrous devotion to Shelley or Tennyson or Browning, which furnishes inspiration to such a host of imitators. Her poems are the utterances of her inspired soul—original and fresh. In spite of the numerous sonnets, which might be supposed to have a personal bearing, it is the delineation of human emotion, instead of the egotistic self-revelations, which forms the essential charm of these beautiful poems.'—NEW YORK TRIBUNE.

'The sonnets in this volume are remarkable for beauty of thought and force of expression. Those to "Adhemar" entitle the author to the appellation of "The Female Petrarch."—LAMARTINE (COURS DE LITTÉRATURE).

'Stella Lewis is one of the most gifted poetical minds of this country. Her celebrity comes not from the writing of sentimental verses and sleepy sonnets, but from the composition of some of the most majestic and brilliant poems belonging to English literature. She is a poet in the truest sense. Her whole nature, her commonest thoughts, her every impulse, her life, are based on poetic inspiration.'—NEW YORK SUNDAY TIMES.

Spottisroods & Co., Printers, New-street Square, London.

